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# CHECKS TO ANTINOMIANISM,

BY THE REV. JOHN FLETCHER,

VICAR OF MADELEY, SALOP.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR JOHN MASON,  
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# FIRST CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM.

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OR,

## A VINDICATION

OF THE

REV. MR. WESLEY'S MINUTES

OF A

PUBLIC CONFERENCE, HELD IN LONDON, AUGUST 7, 1770

OCCASIONED BY

## A CIRCULAR LETTER,

INVITING PRINCIPAL PERSONS, BOTH CLERGY AND LAITY,

As well of the Dissenters as of the Established Church.

*Who disapproved of those Minutes,*

TO OPPOSE THEM IN A BODY IS A DREADFUL  
HERESY;

AND DESIGNED

To remove Prejudice, check Rashness, promote Forbearance,  
Defend the Character of an eminent Minister of Christ,  
And prevent some important Scriptural Truths from being  
hastily branded as heretical.

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IN FIVE LETTERS,

TO THE HON. AND REV. AUTHOR OF THE CIRCULAR LETTER.

By a Lover of Quietness and Liberty of Conscience.



A COPY  
OF  
THE CIRCULAR LETTER,  
WHICH HAS GIVEN OCCASION TO THIS VINDICATION;  
TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,  
A COPY OF THE REV. MR. WESLEY'S  
MINUTES.

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"SIR,

"WHEREAS Mr. Wesley's Conference is to be held at Bristol, on Tuesday, the 6th of August next, it is proposed by Lady Huntingdon, and many other Christian friends, (real Protestants,) to have a meeting at Bristol, at the same time, of such principal persons, both Clergy and Laity, who disapprove of the under-written Minutes; and, as the same are thought injurious to the very fundamental principles of Christianity, it is further proposed, that they go in a body to the said Conference, and insist upon a formal recantation of the said Minutes: and in case of a refusal, that they sign and publish their protest against them. Your presence, Sir, on this occasion is particularly requested: But if it should not suit your convenience to be there, it is desired that you will transmit your sentiments on the subject to such person as you think proper to produce

them. It is submitted to you, whether it would not be right, in the opposition to be made to such a dreadful heresy, to recommend it to as many of your Christian friends, as well of the Dissenters as of the Established Church, as you can prevail on to be there, the cause being of so public a nature.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your obedient Servant,

“ WALTER SHIRLEY.

“ Your answer is desired, directed to the Countess of Huntingdon, or the Rev. Mr. Shirley, or John Lloyd, Esq., in Bath ; or Mr. James Ireland, Merchant, Bristol ; or to Thomas Powis, Esq., at Berwick, near Shrewsbury ; or to Richard Hill, Esq., at Hawkstone, near Whitchurch, Shropshire. *Lodgings will be provided : Inquire at Mr. Ireland's, Bristol.*”

## EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTES OF SOME LATE CONVERSATIONS

BETWEEN THE REV. MR. WESLEY, AND OTHERS,

*At a public Conference, held in London,*

AUGUST 7, 1770,

AND PRINTED BY W. PINE, BRISTOL.

*"Take heed to your Doctrine."*

“ We said in 1744:—‘ We have leaned too much toward Calvinism.’ Wherein?

“ 1. With regard to *man's faithfulness*. Our Lord himself taught us to use the expression; and we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, on his authority, that if man is not ‘ faithful in the unrighteous mammon,’ God will not ‘ give him the true riches.’ ”

“ 2. With regard to *working for life*. This also our Lord has expressly commanded us. *Labour, Εργαζέσθε*, literally, ‘ work for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.’ And, in fact, every believer, till he comes to glory, works *for*, as well as *from* life.

“ 3. We have received it as a maxim, that ‘ a man is to do nothing *in order to* justification.’ Nothing can be more false. Whocver desires to find favour with God, should ‘ cease from evil, and learn to do well.’ Whoever repents, should do ‘ works meet for repentance.’ And if this is not *in order to* find favour, what does he do them for?

“ Review the whole affair.

“ 1. Who of us is *now* accepted of God?

“ He that now believes in Christ, with a loving, obedient heart.

“ 2. But who among those that never heard of Christ ?

“ He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness according to the light he has.

“ 3. Is this the same with, ‘ He that is sincere ?’

“ Nearly, if not quite.

“ 4. Is not this ‘ salvation by works ?’

“ Not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a condition ?

“ 5. What have we then been disputing about for these thirty years ?

“ I am afraid, *about words*.

“ 6. As to *merit* itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid : We are rewarded *according to our works*, yea, *because of our works*. How does this differ from, *for the sake of our works* ? And how differs this from, *secundum merita operum*? ‘ As our works deserve ?’ Can you split this hair ? I doubt, I cannot.

“ 7. The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions is drawn from matter of fact. God does in fact justify those who, by their own confession, neither feared God nor wrought righteousness. Is this an exception to the general rule ?

“ It is a doubt, whether God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure, that the person in question never did ‘ fear God and work righteousness ?’ His own saying so is not proof: For we know, how all that are convinced of sin undervalue themselves in every respect.

“ 8. Does not talking of a justified or a sanctified *state*, tend to mislead men ? almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment ? Whereas we are every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, *according to our works*; according to the whole of our inward tempers, and our outward behaviour.”

## FIRST CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM.

TO THE REV. MR. SHIRLEY.

### LETTER I.

HONOURED AND REV. SIR,

BEFORE a judge passes sentence upon a person accused of theft, he hears what his neighbours have to say for his character. Mr. Wesley, I grant, is accused of what is worse than theft, *dreadful heresy*; and I know that whosoever maintains a dreadful heresy is a *dreadful heretic*, and that the Church of Rome shows no mercy to such: But may not "real Protestants" indulge with the privilege of a felon, one whom they so lately respected as a brother? And may not I, an old friend and acquaintance of his, be permitted to speak a word in his favour, before he is branded in the forehead, as he has already been on the back?

This step, I fear, will cost me my reputation, (if I have any,) and involve me in the same condemnation with him whose cause, together with that of truth, I design to plead: But when humanity prompts, when gratitude calls, when friendship excites, when reason invites, when justice demands, when truth requires, and conscience summons; he does not deserve the name of a *Christian Friend*, who, for any consideration, hesitates to vindicate what he esteems truth, and to stand by an aggrieved friend, brother, and father. Were I not, Sir, on such an occasion as this, to step out of my beloved obscurity, you might deservedly reproach me as a *dastardly wretch*: Nay, you have

already done it in general terms, in your excellent sermon on the fear of man. "How often," say you, "do men sneakingly forsake their friends, instead of gloriously supporting them against a powerful adversary, even when their cause is just, for reasons hastily prudential, for fear of giving umbrage to a superior party or interest!"

These generous words of yours, Rev. Sir, together with the leave you give both Churchmen and Dissenters, to direct to *you* their answers to your Circular Letter, are my excuse for intruding upon you by this epistle, and my apology for begging your candid attention, while I attempt to convince you that my friend's principles and Minutes are not heretical: In order to this, I shall lay before you, and the principal persons both Clergy and laity, whom you have, from all parts of England and Wales, convened at Bristol, by printed letters,

I. A general view of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's doctrine.

II. An account of the commendable design of his Minutes.

III. A vindication of the propositions which they contain, by arguments taken from Scripture, reason, and experience; and by quotations from eminent Calvinist Divines, who have said the same things in different words.

And suppose you yourself, Sir, in particular, should appear to be a strong assertor of the doctrines which you call a *dreadful heresy* in Mr. W., I hope you will not refuse me leave to conclude, by expostulating with you upon your conduct in this affair, and recommending to you, and our other Christian friends, the forbearance which you recommend to others in one of your sermons: "Why doth the narrow heart of man pursue with malice or rashness, those who presume to differ from him?" Yea, and, what is more extraordinary, those who agree with him in all essential points?

I. When, in an intricate case, a prudent judge is afraid to pass an unjust sentence, he inquires, as I observed, into the general conduct of the person accused, and by that means frequently finds out the truth which he investigates. As that method may be of service in the present case, permit me, Sir, to lay before you a general view of Mr. W.'s doctrine.

1. For above these sixteen years I have heard him frequently in his chapels, and sometimes in my church; I have familiarly conversed and corresponded with him, and have often perused his numerous works in verse and prose; and I can truly say, that during all that time I have heard him, upon every proper occasion, steadily maintain the total fall of man in Adam, and his utter inability to recover himself, or to take any one step towards his recovery, "without the grace of God preventing him, that he may have a good will, and working with him when he has that good will."

The deepest expressions that ever struck my ears, on the melancholy subject of our natural depravity and helplessness, are those which dropped from his lips: and I have ever observed that he constantly ascribes to divine grace, not only the good works and holy tempers of believers, but all the good thoughts of upright Heathens, and the good desires of those professors whom he sees "begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh:" When, to my great surprise, some of those who accuse him of "robbing God of the glory of his grace, and ascribing too much to man's power," directly or indirectly maintain, that Demas and his fellow apostates never had any grace; and that if once they went on far in the ways of God, it was merely by the force of fallen nature; a sentiment which Mr. W. looks upon as diametrically opposite to the humbling assertion of our Lord, "Without me ye can do nothing;" and which he can no more admit than the rankest Pelagianism.

2. I must likewise testify, that he faithfully points out Christ as the only way of salvation ; and strongly recommends faith as the only means of receiving him, and all the benefits of his righteous life and meritorious death : And truth obliges me to declare, that he frequently expresses his detestation of the errors of modern Pharisees, who laugh at Original Sin, set up the powers of fallen man, cry down the operations of God's Spirit, deny the absolute necessity of the blood and righteousness of Christ, and refuse him the glory of all the good that may be found in Jew or Gentile. And you will not without difficulty, Sir, find in England, and, perhaps, in all the world, a Minister who hath borne more frequent testimonies, either from the pulpit or the press, against those dangerous errors. All his works confirm my assertion, especially his sermons on Original Sin, and Salvation by Faith, and his masterly refutation of Dr. Taylor, the wisest Pelagian and Socinian of our age. Nor am I afraid to have this testimony confronted with his Minutes, being fully persuaded that, when they are candidly explained, they rather confirm than overthrow it.

His manner of preaching the Fall and the Recovery of man, is attended with a peculiar advantage; it is close and experimental: He not only points out the truth of those doctrines, but presses his hearers to cry to God that they may feel their weight upon their hearts. Some open those great truths very clearly, but let their congregations rest, like the stony-ground hearers, in the first emotions of sorrow and joy which the word frequently excites. Not so Mr. Wesley: He will have true penitents "feel the plague of their own hearts, travail, be heavy laden," and receive "the sentence of death in themselves," according to the glorious "ministration of condemnation:" And, according to "the ministration of righteousness and of the Spirit which exceeds in glory," he insists upon true believers knowing

for themselves that Jesus “ hath power on earth to forgive sins,” and asserts that they “ taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,” and that they “ are made partakers of the Holy Ghost,” and “ the divine nature; the Spirit itself bearing witness with their spirit that they are the children of God.”

3. The next fundamental doctrine in Christianity, is that of *Holiness of Heart and Life*; and no one can here accuse Mr. W. of leaning to the Antinomian delusion, which “ makes void the law through” a speculative and barren “ faith:” On the contrary, he appears to be peculiarly set for the defence of practical religion; for, instead of representing Christ “as the minister of sin,” with Ranters, to the great grief and offence of many, he sets him forth as a complete *Saviour from sin*. Not satisfied to preach holiness begun, he preaches finished holiness, and calls believers to such a degree of heart-purifying faith, as may enable them to triumph in Christ, as “ being made to them of God, sanctification,” as well as “ righteousness.”

It is, I grant, his misfortune, (if indeed it be one,) to preach a fuller salvation than most professors expect to enjoy here; for he asserts that Jesus can “ make clean” *the inside*, as well as the *outside*, of his vessels unto honour; that he hath power on earth “ to save his people from their sins;” and that his blood “ cleanses from all sin,” from the guilt and defilement both of original and actual corruption. He is bold enough to declare with St. John, that “ if we say we have no sin,” either by nature or practice, “ we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” He is legal enough not to be ashamed of these words of Moses, “ The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine

heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." And he dares to believe that the Lord can perform the words which he spoke by Ezekiel: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from ALL your filthiness, and from ALL your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. I will also save you from *all* your uncleannesses." Hence it is that he constantly exhorts his hearers "to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Saviour;" till, by a strong and lively faith, they can continually "reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord :" He tells them that "he who committeth sin is the servant of sin;"—that "our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin;"—that "if the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed,"—and that, although "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" will not deliver us from the innocent infirmities incident to flesh and blood, it will nevertheless make us "free from the law of sin and death," and enable us to say with holy triumph, "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" In a word, he thinks that God can so "shed abroad his love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us," as to "sanctify us wholly, soul, body, and spirit;" and enable us to "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks." And he is persuaded that he who "can do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think," is able to fill us with "the perfect love which casts out fear; that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies," may have "the mind that was in Christ," be righteous

as the *man* Jesus was righteous, “ walk as he also walked ;” and be in our measure “ as he was in the world ;” he as the stock of the tree of righteousness, and we as the branches, “ having our fruit ” from him “ unto holiness,” and “ serving God without fear in true holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.”

This he sometimes calls *Full Sanctification*, the state of “fathers in Christ,” or the “glorious liberty of the children of God ;” sometimes, “a being strengthened, established, and settled ;” or “being rooted and grounded in love.” But most commonly he calls it *Christian Perfection*: A word which, though used by the apostles in the same sense, cannot be used by him without raising the pity or indignation of one half of the religious world ; some making it the subject of their pious sneers, and godly lampoons ; while others tell you roundly, they abhor it above every thing in the creation.

*Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ !*

On account of this doctrine it is that he is traduced as a Pharisee, a Papist, an Antichrist ; some of his opposers taking it for granted that he makes void the priestly office of Christ, by affirming that his blood can so completely wash us here from our sins, that at death we shall “ be found of him in peace, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing ;” while others, to colour their opposition to the many Scriptures which he brings to support this unfashionable doctrine, give it out that he only wants the old man to be so refined in all his tempers, and regulated in all his outward behaviour, as to appear perfect in the flesh ; or, in other terms, that he sets up pharisaic *SELF*, instead of “ Christ *completely* formed in us *as the full* hope of glory.” But I must (for one) do him the justice to say, he is misapprehended ; and that what he calls Perfection, is nothing but the rich cluster of all the spiritual blessings

promised to believers in the Gospel; and, among the rest, a continual sense of the virtue of Christ's atoning and purifying blood, preventing both old guilt from returning, and new guilt from fastening upon the conscience; together with the deepest consciousness of our helplessness and nothingness in our best estate, the most endearing discoveries of the Redeemer's love, and the most humbling and yet ravishing views of his glorious fulness: Witness one of his favourite hymns on that subject:—

Confound, o'erpower me with thy grace ;  
 I would be by myself abhor'd :  
 (All might, all majesty, all praise,  
   All glory, be to Christ my Lord !)  
 Now let me gain perfection's height,  
   Now let me into nothing fall ;  
 Be less than nothing in thy sight,  
   And feel that *Christ is all in all.*

4. But this is not all: He holds also *General Redemption*, and its necessary consequences, which some account *dreadful heresies*. He asserts with St. Paul, that "Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man;" and this grace he calls *free*, as extending itself *freely* to all. Nor can he help expressing his surprise at those pious Ministers who maintain that the Saviour keeps his grace, as they suppose he kept his blood, from the greatest part of mankind, and yet engross to themselves the title of *Preachers of FREE grace!*

He frequently observes, with the same Apostle, that "Christ is the Saviour of ALL men, but especially of them that believe :" and that "God will have *all* men to be saved," consistently with their moral agency, and the tenor of his Gospel.

With St. John he maintains, that "God is love," and that "Christ is the propitiation not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the *whole world* ;" with David, he affirms that "God's mercy is over all his works ;" and with St. Peter, that "the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that *all* should

come to repentance ;” yea, that God, without hypocrisy, “ commandeth *all* men, *everywhere*, to repeni.” Accordingly he says with the Son of God, “ Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely ;” and after his blessed example, as well as by his gracious command, he “ preaches the Gospel to *every creature* ;” which he apprehends would be inconsistent with common honesty, if there were not a Gospel for *every creature*. Nor can he doubt of it in the least, when he considers that Christ is a King as well as a Priest ; that we are “ under a law to Him ;” that those men who “ will not have Him to reign over them, shall be brought and slain before Him ;” yea, that He “ will judge the secrets of men,” according to St. Paul’s Gospel, and “ take vengeance on all them that obey not his *own* Gospel, and be the author of eternal salvation to *none but* them that obey him.” With this principle, as with a key given us by God himself, he opens those things which are “ hard to be understood,” in the Epistles of St. Paul, and “ which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do some other Scriptures, *if not* to their own destruction ;” *at least to* the overthrowing of the faith of some weak Christians, and the hardening of many, very many infidels.

As a true son of the Church of England, he believes that “ Christ redeemed him and all mankind ;” that “ for us men,” and not merely for the *elect*, “ He came down from heaven, and made upon the cross, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the *whole* world.” Like an honest man, and yet a man of sense, he so subscribed the Seventeenth Article as not to reject the Thirty-first, which he thinks of equal force, and much more explicit ; and therefore, as the Seventeenth Article authorises him, he “ receives God’s promises in such wise as they are generally set forth in the Holy Scripture ;” rejecting, after

the example of our Governors in Church and State, the Lambeth Articles, in which the doctrine of *absolute, unconditional* election and reprobation was maintained, and which some Calvinist Divines, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, vainly attempted to impose on these kingdoms, by adding them to the Thirty-nine Articles. Far, therefore, from thinking he does not act a fair part, in rejecting the doctrine of particular redemption ; he cannot conceive by what salvo the consciences of those Ministers, who embrace it can permit them to say to each of their communicants, "The blood of Christ was shed for *thuce* ;" and to baptize promiscuously *all* children within their respective parishes, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," when all that are unredeemed have no more right to the *blood, name, and Spirit* of Christ, than Lucifer himself.

Thus far Mr. W. agrees with Arminius, because he thinks that illustrious Divine agreed thus far with the Scriptures, and all the early Fathers of the Church. But if Arminius (as the author of *Pictas Oxoniensis* affirms in his letter to Dr. Adams) "denied that man's nature is totally corrupt ; and asserted that he hath still\* a freedom of will to turn to God, but not without the assistance of grace ;" Mr. W. is no Arminian, for he strongly asserts the *total* fall of man ; and constantly maintains that by nature man's will is only free to evil, and that divine grace must first prevent, and then continually further, him, to make him willing and able to turn to God.

I must, however, confess that he does not, as some *real Protestants*, continually harp upon the words **FREE** grace, and **FREE** will ; but he gives

\* This is worded in so ambiguous a manner, as to give readers room to think that Arminius held man hath a will to turn to God before grace prevents him, and only wants some divine assistance to finish what nature has power to begin. In this sense of the words it is I deny Mr. W. is an Arminian.

reasons of considerable weight for this. 1. Christ and his Apostles never did so. 2. He knows the word *grace* necessarily implies the *freeness* of a favour, and the word *will* the *freedom* of our choice; and he has too much sense to delight in perpetual tautology. 3. He finds by blessed experience, that when the will is touched by divine grace, and yields to the touch, it is as free to good as it was before to evil. He dares not, therefore, make the maintaining *free will*, any more than *free breath*, the criterion of an unconverted man. On the contrary, he believes none are converted but those who have a *free will* to follow Jesus; and far from being ashamed to be called a "free-willer," he affirms it as essential to all men to be "free-willing creatures," as to be "rational animals;" and he supposes he can as soon find a diamond or a flint without gravity, as a good or bad man without free-will.

Nor will I conceal that I never heard him use that favourite expression of some good men, "Why me? Why me?" though he is not at all against their using it, if they can do it to edification. But as he does not see that any of the saints, either of the Old or New Testament, ever used it, he is afraid to be humble and "wise above what is written," lest *voluntary humility* should introduce refined pride before he is aware. Doubting, therefore, whether he can say, "Why me? Why me?" without the self-pleasing idea of his being preferred to thousands, or without a touch of the secret self-applause that tickles the Pharisee's heart, when he "thanks God he is not as other men," he leaves the fashionable exclamation to others, with all the refinements of modern Divinity; and chooses to keep to St. Paul's expression, "He loved me," which implies no exclusion of his poor fellow-sinners; or to that of the royal Psalmist, "Lord, what is *man* that thou art mindful of him; and the *son of man*, that thou visitest him!"

5. As a consequence of the doctrine of General Redemption, Mr. W. lays down two axioms, of which he never loses sight in his preaching. The First is, THAT ALL OUR SALVATION IS OF GOD IN CHRIST, and therefore of GRACE; all opportunities, invitations, inclination, and power to believe, being bestowed upon us of mere grace;—grace most absolutely free: And so far I hope that all who are called Gospel Ministers agree with him. But he proceeds farther; for, Secondly, he asserts with equal confidence, that, according to the Gospel dispensation, ALL OUR DAMNATION IS OF OURSELVES, by our obstinate unbelief, and avoidable unfaithfulness: As we may “neglect so great salvation,” desire to “be excused” from coming to the feast of the Lamb, “make light” of God’s gracious offers, refuse to “occupy,” bury our talent, and act the part of the “slothful servant;” or, in other words, “resist, grieve, do despite to,” and “quench, the Spirit of grace,” *by our moral agency.*

The First of these evangelical axioms he builds upon such Scriptures as these; “In me is thy help.—Look unto me and be saved.—No man cometh unto me except the Father draw him.—What hast thou that thou hast not received?—We are not sufficient to think aright of ourselves; all our sufficiency is of God.—Christ is exalted to give repentance.—Faith is the gift of God.—Without me ye can do nothing,” &c. &c.

And the Second he founds upon such passages as these: “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.—Ye always resist the Holy Ghost.—They rejected the counsel of God towards themselves.—Grieve not the Spirit.—Quench not the Spirit.—My Spirit shall not always strive with man.—Turn, why will ye die?—Kiss the Son lest ye perish.—I gave Jezebel time to repent, and she repented not.—The goodness of God leads [not

*drags*] thee to repentance, who after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up wrath unto thyself.—Their eyes have they closed, lest they should see, and be converted, and I should heal them.—See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh from heaven.—I set before you life and death, choose life!—Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.—I would have gathered you, and ye would not,” &c. &c.

As to the *moral agency* of man, Mr. W. thinks it cannot be denied upon the principles of common sense, and civil government; much less upon those of natural and revealed religion; as nothing would be more absurd than to bind us by laws of a civil or a spiritual nature; nothing more foolish than to propose to us punishments and rewards; and nothing more capricious than to inflict the one or bestow the other upon us; if we were not *moral agents*.

He is therefore persuaded, the most complete system of Divinity is that in which neither of those two axioms is superseded. He thinks it is bold and unscriptural to set up the one at the expense of the other, convinced that the Prophets, the Apostles, and Jesus Christ, left us no such precedent; and that, to avoid what is termed *legality*, we must not run into refinements which they knew nothing of, and make them perpetually contradict themselves: Nor can we, he believes, without an open violation of the laws of candour and criticism, lay a greater stress upon a few obscure and controverted passages, than upon an hundred plain and irrefragable Scripture proofs. He, therefore, supposes that those persons are under a capital mistake, who maintain only the first Gospel-axiom; and, under pretence of securing to God *all* the glory of the salvation of *one* elect, give to perhaps *twenty* reprobates full room to lay *all* the blame of their damnation, either upon their first parents, or their

Creator. This way of making twenty *real* holes, in order to stop a *supposed* one, he cannot see consistent either with wisdom or Scripture.

Thinking it therefore safest not to “put asunder” the truths which “God has joined together,” he makes all extremes meet in one blessed scriptural medium. With the Antinomian he preaches, “God worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure ;” and with the Legalist he cries, “Work out, therefore, your own salvation with fear and trembling ;” and thus he has all St. Paul’s doctrine. With the Ranter he says, “God has chosen you, you are elect ;” but as it is “through sanctification of the Spirit,” and “belief of the truth,” with the disciples of Moses he infers, “Make your calling and election sure, for *if ye do* these things ye shall never fall.” Thus he presents his hearers with all St. Peter’s system of truth, which the others had rent in pieces.

Again, according to the First axiom, he says with the Perfect Preacher, “All things are now ready ;” but with him he adds also, according to the Second, “Come, lest you never taste the Gospel feast.”— Thinking it extremely dangerous not to divide the Word of God aright, he endeavours to give to every one the portion of it that suits him ; cutting, according to times, persons, and circumstances, either with the smooth or the rough edge of his two-edged sword. Therefore, when he addresses those that are steady, and “partakers of the Gospel grace from the first day until now,” as the Philippians, he makes use of the First principle, and testifies his “confidence that he who hath begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Christ.” But when he expostulates with persons “that ran well, and do not now obey the truth,” according to his Second axiom, he says to them, as St. Paul did to the Galatians, “I stand in doubt of you ; ye are fallen from grace.”

In short, he would think that he mangled the Gospel, and forgot part of his awful commission, if, when he has declared that "he who believeth shall be saved," he did not also add, that "he who believeth not shall be damned;" or, which is the same, that none perish merely for Adam's sin, but for their own unbelief, and wilful rejection of the Saviour's grace. Thus he advances God's glory every way, entirely ascribing to his mercy and grace all the salvation of the elect, and completely freeing him from the blame of directly or indirectly hanging the millstone of damnation about the necks of the reprobate. And this he effectually does by showing that the former owe all they are, and all they have, to creating, preserving, and redeeming love, whose innumerable bounties they freely and continually receive; and that the rejection of the latter has absolutely no cause but their obstinate rejecting of that astonishing mercy which wept over Jerusalem; and prayed and bled even for those that shed the atoning blood;—the blood that expiated all sin but that of final unbelief.

I have now finished my sketch of Mr. W.'s doctrine, so far as it has fallen under my observation during above sixteen years' particular acquaintance with him and his works. It is not my design, Sir, to inquire into the truth of his sentiments, much less shall I attempt to prove them orthodox, according to the ideas that some *real Protestants* entertain of orthodoxy. This only I beg leave to observe, suppose he be mistaken in all the Scriptures on which he founds his doctrine of Christian Perfection and General Redemption, yet his mistakes seem rather to arise from a regard for Christ's glory, than from enmity to his offices; and altogether do not amount to any heresy at all; the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, namely, *the fall of man, justification by the merits of Christ, sanctification by the agency of the Holy Spirit*, and

*the worship of the One true God in the mysterious distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, as it is maintained in the three Creeds, not being at all affected by any of his peculiar sentiments.

But you possibly imagine, Sir, that he has lately changed his doctrine, and adopted a new system. If you do, you are under a very great mistake; and, to convince you of it, permit me to conclude this letter by a paragraph of one which I received from him last spring :—

“ I always did (for between these thirty and forty years) clearly assert the total fall of man, and his utter inability to do any good of himself; the absolute necessity of the grace and Spirit of God to raise even a good thought or desire in our hearts; the Lord’s rewarding no works, and accepting of none, but so far as they proceed from his preventing, convincing, and converting grace, through the Beloved; the blood and righteousness of Christ being the sole meritorious cause of our salvation. And who is there in England that has asserted these things more strongly and steadily than I have done ? ”

Leaving you to answer this question, I remain, with due respect, Hon. and Rev. Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

In the bond of a peaceful Gospel,  
J. FLETCHER.

MADELEY, July 29, 1771.

## LETTER II.

HONOURED AND REV. SIR,

HAVING proved that Mr. W.’s doctrine is not heretical, permit me to consider the propositions which close the Minutes of his last Conference, on which, it seems, your charge of *dreadful heresy* is founded.

They wear, I confess, a new aspect; and such is the force of prejudice, and attachment to particular modes of expression, that at first they appeared to be very unguarded, if not altogether erroneous. But when the din of the severe epithets, bestowed upon them by some warm friends, was out of my ears; when I had prayed to the Father of Lights for meekness of wisdom, and given place to calm reflection, I saw them in quite a different light. Our Lord commands us "not to judge according to the appearance, but to judge righteous judgment;" appearances, therefore, did not seem to me sufficient to condemn any man, much less an elder, and such an elder as Mr. W. I considered besides, that the circumstances in which a Minister sometimes finds himself with respect to his hearers, and particular errors spreading among them, may oblige him to do or say things, which, though very right according to the time, place, persons, and junctures, may yet appear very wrong to those who do not stand just where he does. I saw, for example, that if St. Paul had been in St. James's circumstances, he would have preached justification in as guarded a manner as St. James; and that if St. James had been in St. Paul's place, he would have preached it as freely as St. Paul; and I recollect that in some places St. Paul himself seems even more legal than St. James. (See Rom. ii. 7, 10, 14; Gal. vi. 7, &c., and 1 Tim. vi. 19.)

These reflections made me not only suspend my judgment concerning Mr. W.'s propositions, but consider what we may candidly suppose was his design in writing them for, and recommending them to, the Preachers in connexion with him. And I could not help seeing, that it was only to guard them and their hearers against Antinomian principles and practices, which spread like wildfire in some of his Societies; where persons who spoke in the most glorious manner of Christ, and their

interest in his complete salvation, have been found living in the greatest immoralities, or indulging the most unchristian tempers. Nor need I go far for a proof of this sad assertion. In one of his Societies not many miles from my parish, a married man, who professed being *in a state of justification and sanctification*, growing wise above what is written, despised his brethren as legalists, and his teachers as persons not clear in the Gospel. He instilled his principles into a serious young woman; and what was the consequence? Why, they talked about “finished salvation in Christ,” and “the absurdity of perfection in the flesh,” till a perfect child was conceived and born; and, to save appearances, the mother swore it to a travelling man that cannot be heard of. Thus to avoid legality, they plunged into hypocrisy, fornication, adultery, perjury, and the depth of Ranterism. Is it not hard that a Minister should be traduced as guilty of *dreadful heresy* for trying to put a stop to such dreadful practices? And is it not high time that he should cry to all that regard his warnings, “Take heed to your doctrine?” As if he had said:—

“ Avoid all extremes. While, on the one hand, you keep clear of the pharisaic delusion that slighteth Christ, and makes the pretended merit of an imperfect obedience the procuring cause of eternal life; see that, on the other hand, you do not lean to the Antinomian error, which, under pretence of exalting Christ, speaks contemptuously of obedience, and makes void the law through a faith that *does not work by love*. As there is but a step between high Arminianism and Self-righteousness, so there is but one between high Calvinism and Antinomianism; I charge you to shun both, especially the latter.

“ You know, by sad experience, that at this time we stand particularly in danger of splitting upon the Antinomian rock. Many smatterers in Chris-

tian experience talk of *finished salvation in Christ*, or boast of being in a state of justification and sanctification, while they know little of themselves, and less of Christ. Their whole behaviour testifies, that their hearts are void of humble love, and full of carnal confidence. They cry, *Lord, Lord!* with as much assurance, and as little right, as the foolish virgins. They pass for sweet Christians, dear children of God, and good believers; but their secret reserves evidence them to be only such believers as Simon Magus, Ananias, and Sapphira.

"Some, with Diotrephes, 'love to have the pre-eminence, and prate malicious words;' and, not content therewith, 'they do not themselves receive the brethren, and forbid them that would,' and even cast them out of the church as heretics. Some have 'forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; they are wells without water, clouds without rain, and trees without fruit.' With Judas, they try to 'load themselves with thick clay,' endeavour to 'lay up treasures on earth,' and 'make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Some, with the incestuous Corinthian, are led captive by fleshly lusts, and fall into the greatest enormities. Others, with the language of the awakened publican in their mouths, are fast asleep in their spirits; you hear them speak of the corruptions of their hearts, in as unaffected and airy a manner, as if they talked of freckles upon their faces: It seems they run down their sinful nature, only to apologize for their sinful practices; or to appear great proficients in self-knowledge, and court the praise due to genuine humility.

"Others, quietly settled on the lees of the Laodicean state, by the whole tenor of their life say, 'they are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing;' utter strangers to 'hunger and thirst after righteousness,' they never importunately

beg, never wrestle hard for the hidden manna : On the contrary, they sing a *requiem* to their poor dead souls, and say, ‘ Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up (in Christ) for many years,’ yea, for ever and ever ; and thus, like Demas, they go on talking of Christ and heaven, but loving their ease, and enjoying this present world.

“ Yet many of these, like Herod, hear and entertain us gladly ; but like him also they keep their beloved sin, pleading for it as a right eye, and saving it as a right hand. To this day their bosom corruption is not only alive, but indulged ; their treacherous Delilah is hugged ; and their spiritual ‘ Agag walks delicately,’ and boasts that ‘ the bitterness of death is past,’ and he shall never be ‘ hewed in pieces before the Lord :’ Nay, to dare so much as to talk of his *dying* before the body, becomes an almost unpardonable crime.

“ Forms and fair shows of godliness deceive us : Many, whom our Lord might well compare to ‘ whitened sepulchres,’ look like angels of light when they are abroad, and prove tormenting fiends at home. We see them weep under sermons, we hear them pray and sing with the tongues of men and angels ; they even profess the faith that removes mountains ; and yet, by and by, we discover they stumble at every mole-hill ; every trifling temptation throws them into peevishness, fretfulness, impatience, ill-humour, discontent, anger, and sometimes into loud passion.

“ Relative duties are, by many, grossly neglected : Husbands slight their wives, or wives neglect and plague their husbands : Children are spoiled, parents disregarded, and masters disobeyed : Yea, so many are the complaints against servants professing godliness, on account of their unfaithfulness, indolence, pert answering again, forgetfulness of their menial condition, or insolent expectations, that some serious persons prefer those

who have no knowledge of the truth, to those who make a high profession of it.

"Knowledge is certainly *increased*; 'many run to and fro' after it, but it is seldom experimental; the power of God is frequently talked of, but rarely felt, and too often cried down under the despicable name of *frames* and *feelings*. Numbers *seek*, by hearing a variety of Gospel Ministers, reading all the religious books that are published, learning the best tunes to our hymns, disputing on controverted points of doctrine, telling or hearing church-news, and listening to, or retailing, spiritual scandal. But alas! few *strive* in pangs of heartfelt convictions; few 'deny themselves and take up their cross daily'; few 'take the kingdom of heaven by *the holy violence*' of wrestling faith, and agonizing prayer; few *see*, and fewer live in, 'the kingdom of God,' which 'is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' In a word, many say, 'Lo! Christ is here;' and, 'Lo! he is there;' but few can consistently witness that '*the kingdom of heaven is within them.*'"

"Many assert, that 'the clothing of the king's daughter is of wrought gold;' but few, very few experience that she is 'all glorious within;' and it is well, if many are not bold enough to maintain that she is *all full of corruptions*. With more truth than ever we may say,

Ye different sects, who all declare,  
Lo! here is Christ, or Christ is there;  
Your stronger proofs divinely give,  
And show us where *the Christians* live:  
Your claim, alas! ye cannot prove,  
Ye want the genuine mark of *love*.

"The consequences of this high, and yet lifeless profession, are as evident as they are deplorable. Selfish views, sinister designs, inveterate prejudice, pitiful bigotry, party-spirit, self-sufficiency, contempt of others, envy, jealousy, 'making men offenders for a word,' (possibly a scriptural word

too,) taking advantage of each other's infirmities, magnifying innocent mistakes, putting the worst construction upon each other's words and actions, false accusations, backbiting, malice, revenge, persecution, and a hundred such evils, prevail among religious people, to the great astonishment of the children of the world, and the unspeakable grief of the true Israelites that yet remain among us.

"But this is not all. Some of our hearers do not even keep to the great outlines of heathen morality: Not satisfied practically to reject Christ's declaration, that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive,' they proceed to that pitch of covetousness and daring injustice, as not to pay their just debts; yea, and to cheat and to extort whenever they have a fair opportunity. How few of our Societies are there where this, or some other evil, has not broken out, and given such shakes to the ark of the Gospel, that, had not the Lord wonderfully interposed, it must long ago have been overset! And you know how to this day the name and truth of God are openly blasphemed among the baptized Heathens, through the Antinomian lives of many, who 'say they are Jews when they are not, but *by their works declare* they are of the synagogue of Satan.' At your peril, therefore, my brethren, countenance them not: I know you would not do it designedly, but you may do it unawares; therefore, 'take heed,'—more than ever, 'take heed to your doctrine.' Let it be scripturally Evangelical: Give not the children's bread unto dogs: Comfort not people that do not mourn. When you should give emetics, do not administer cordials, and by that means strengthen the hands of the slothful and unprofitable servant. I repeat it once more, warp not to Antinomianism; and, in order to this, *Take heed, O! take heed to your doctrine.*"

Surely, Sir, there is no harm in this word of exhortation; it is scriptural, and Mr. W.'s pen can-

not make it heretical. Take we then heed to the design of the directions which follow.

It is evident that, in order to keep his fellow-labourers clear from Antinomianism, he directs them, FIRST, not to *lean too much towards Calvinism*; and, SECONDLY, not to *talk of a justified and sanctified state so unguardedly as some, even Arminians, do*; which “tends to mislead men,” and relax their watchful attention to their internal and external works, that is, to “the whole of their inward tempers, and outward behaviour.” See No. 8.

He produces three particulars, wherein he thinks that both he and his assistants in the Lord’s vineyard have leaned too much towards Calvinism, each of which has a natural and strong tendency to countenance the Antinomian delusion. The FIRST, being afraid or ashamed to maintain that every man is *faithfully* to employ his every talent; though our Lord himself goes so far in maintaining this doctrine as to declare that “if a man be not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, God will not give him the true riches.”—The SECOND, being afraid to use the expression *working for life*; although our Lord, who must be allowed perfectly to understand his own Gospel, uses it himself.—And the THIRD, granting, without proper distinction, that a man *is to do nothing in order to justification*; than which, says he, *nothing can be more false*; as common sense dictates that a rebel must lay down his arms before he can receive a pardon from his prince.

This being premised, Mr. W. invites his fellow-labourers to *review the whole affair*; and, while he does it, he saps the foundations of the Babels built by those who call Christ, “Lord! Lord!” without departing from iniquity. Who among Christians, says he, *is now accepted of God?* Not he, that like Hymeneus formerly believed, and concerning faith *hath now made shipwreck*: Nor he that, like Simon

Magus, actually believes with a speculative, Antinomian faith ; but “ he that now believes in Christ with a loving and obedient heart ;” or, as our Lord and St. Paul express it, he whose “ faith works by love, and whose love keeps God’s commandments.” This must at once overthrow the pretensions of those whose feigned faith, instead of producing a change in their hearts, only adds positiveness to their self-conceit, bitterness to their bad tempers, and perhaps licentiousness to their worldly lives.

Still carrying on his point, he observes next, to the shame of loose Christians, that none *are accepted of God* even among the Heathens, but those that *fear him and work righteousness*. Nor is his observation improper, (you, Sir, being judge,) for you tell us in your fifth sermon, page 84,\* that “ Cornelius was a man of singular probity, humanity, and morality; and that a view of his character may perhaps convince some, who consider themselves as Christians, how far short they are even of his imperfect righteousness.”

This leads him, No. 4, to touch upon an important objection, that will naturally occur to the mind of a Protestant ; and he answers it by standing *for the necessity of works* as firmly as he does *against their merit* in point of *salvation* ; thus cutting down, with one truly evangelical stroke, the arrogancy of self-righteous Papists, and the delusion of licentious Protestants. And lest Antinomians should, from the Protestant doctrine that good works have absolutely no merit in point of salvation, take occasion to slight them and live in sin, he very properly observes, No. 6, that believers shall be *rewarded* in heaven, and are even often rewarded on earth, *because of their works*, and *according to their works*, which he apprehends does not so widely differ from *secundum merita operum*, as Protestants, in the

\* London, printed for J. Johnson, 1762.

heat of their contentions with the Papists, have been apt to conclude. No. 7, he starts another objection, which Antinomians will naturally make to St. Peter's declaration, that God accepts those who "fear him and work righteousness."

And now, Hon. Sir, reserving for another place the consideration of his answer, let me appeal to your candour. From the general tenor of these propositions, is it not evident, that Mr. W. (who is now among Gospel Ministers what St. James formerly was among the disciples, and Mr. Baxter among the Puritan Divines, that is, the person peculiarly commissioned by the Bishop of souls, to defend the Gospel against the encroachments of Antinomianism) aims at stemming the torrent of their delusions, and not at all at *injuring the fundamental principles of Christianity*, or bringing "a dreadful heresy into the Church?"

You may reply, that you do not so much consider what he *aims* at doing, as what he *has* actually done. Nay, Sir, the intention is what a candid judge, much more a loving brother, should particularly consider. If aiming to kill a wild beast, that attacks my friend, I unfortunately stab him, it is a "melancholy accident;" but he wrongs me much, who represents it as a "dreadful barbarity." In like manner, if Mr. W. has unhappily wounded the truth, in attempting to give the wolf in sheep's clothing a killing stroke, his mistake should rather be called "well-meant legality" than "dreadful heresy."

You possibly reply, "Let any one look at these Minutes, and say whether all the unawakened Clergy in the land would not approve and receive them." And what if they did? Would the propositions be the worse barely for this? Is nothing Gospel, but what directly shocks common sense? And is the Apostles' Creed dreadfully heretical, because all the carnal Clergy of the Church of England, yea, and of the Church of Rome, receive

it? At this strange rate, we must give up the Bible itself, for all the Socinians receive it. Ashamed of taking further notice of an argument by which every Papist might attack the reasonable simplicity of our Communion Service, and defend the gross absurdity of transubstantiation, I come to an objection of greater weight:—

“Mr. W. contradicts himself. He has hitherto preached salvation by faith, and he now talks of *salvation by works, as a condition*: He has a thousand times offered a *free pardon* to the worst of sinners, and now he has the assurance to declare, that a *man is to do something in order to justification*. Where will you find such inconsistencies?” Where! In the Old and New Testament, and especially in the Epistles of the great preacher of free justification, and salvation by faith. There you will see many such *seeming* inconsistencies as these:—“Eternal life is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.—Charge the rich to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation, that they may lay hold on eternal life: We are temperate, to obtain an incorruptible crown.—By grace are ye saved through faith.—In so *doing* thou shalt save thyself.—Work out your own salvation.—We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.—The Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law.—God justifieth the ungodly and him that worketh not.—He shall render to every man according to his works, even eternal life to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory.—God forbid that I should glory in any thing save in the cross of Christ.—As the truth of God is in me, no man shall stop me of this glorying,” that I have kept myself from being burdensome.—“I am the chief of sinners.—I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.—We rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.—Our rejoic-

ing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.—Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us; not of works, lest any man should boast; for if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.—I keep under my body, lest I myself be a cast-away: Be not deceived, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap: He that soweth little shall reap little; he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.—I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither things present nor things to come, &c., shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.”—Those that fall away, “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame; for the earth which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.—Some of the branches were broken off by unbelief, thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear; continue in God’s goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

Now, Sir, permit me to beg you would lay your hand upon your heart, and say whether malicious Infidels have not a fairer show of reason to raise wicked men against St. Paul, than you have to raise good men against Mr. W. And whether a grain of the candour with which you would reconcile the *seeming\** contradictions of the great Apostle, would not be more than sufficient to reconcile the *seeming* inconsistencies of the great Minister whom you have so warmly attacked.

\* Most of these *seeming* inconsistencies of St. Paul, and those which are charged upon Mr. W., will be reconciled with the greatest ease, by considering the two axioms mentioned in my first letter. In the former part of the imaginary contradictions, those servants of God make use of the first Gospel axiom, in the latter part they employ the second; and thus declare the whole counsel of God.

Some persons, indeed, complain aloud that "Mr. W., in his new scheme of salvation by works, as a condition, fairly renounces Christ's blood and righteousness." I grant that the words "blood and righteousness" are not found in the Minutes, but "acceptance by believing in Christ" is found there; and he must be a caviller indeed who asserts that he means a Christ without blood, or a Christ without righteousness. Besides, when he cuts off *the merit of works* from having any share in our salvation, far from forgetting the meritorious life and death of the Redeemer, he effectually guards them, and the Protestant ark, sprinkled with the atoning blood, from the rash touches of all merit-mongers.\* Add to this, that Mr. W. has sufficiently declared his faith in the atonement, in thousands of sermons and hymns, some of which are continually sung both by him and the *real Protestants*; so that *out of their own mouth* their groundless charge may be refuted.

Again, the doctrine of the atonement had been fully discussed in former Conferences and Minutes, and Mr. W. is too methodical to bring the same thing over and over again; nor is it reasonable to expect it should be peculiarly insisted upon in a charge against Antinomians, who rather abuse than deny it. Once more, Mr. W.'s extract of the Minutes is a memorandum of what was said in the latter part of a Conference, or conversation; and no unprejudiced person will maintain, that those who do not expressly mention the atonement in every conversation, do actually renounce it.

To conclude: If the author of the Minutes had advanced the following propositions, which you have dropped in your second sermon, you might have had some reason to suspect his not doing the atonement justice. Page 36, "Christ only did that to

\* The name that Bishop Latimer gives to the Papists.

the human nature which Adam (had he stood upright) would have done." What! Sir, would Adam have died for his posterity, or did not Christ die for them? You add, "See the true reason of his death; that he might subdue the earthly life in every sense."—And page 45, "He certainly died for no other end, but that we might receive the Spirit of holiness." Mr. W. is of a very different sentiment, Sir; for, poor heretic! he believes with the Papists, that "Christ died to make an atonement for us;" and with St. John, that "he is the propitiation for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world." Nevertheless, he will not cry out, "Dreadful heresy," though he will probably think that you were once a little too deeply in Mr. Law's sentiments. Leaving you to think with how much justice I might descant here upon this line of the satyric poet.—

*Dir veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas,*

I remain,

Rev. and dear Sir,

Your's, &c.

J. FLETCHER.

### LETTER III.

HONOURED AND REV. SIR,

We have seen how exceedingly commendable was Mr. W.'s design in writing what you have extracted from his last Minutes; and how far from being unanswerable are the *general* objections, which some have moved against them. Let us now proceed to a candid inquiry into the true meaning of the propositions. They are thus prefaced:

"We said in 1744, *We have leaned too much toward Calvinism. Wherein?*"

This single sentence is enough, I grant, to make some persons account Mr. W. a heretic. He is not a Calvinist! And what is still more *dreadful*, he has the assurance to say, that he has *leaned too much towards Calvinism!* This will sound like a double heresy in their ears; but not in *your's*, Sir, who seem to carry your Anti-Calvinistical notions farther than Mr. W. himself. He never spoke more clearly to the point of *free grace* than you do, page 85 of your sermons: "God," say you, "never left himself without witnesses, not only from "the visible things of the creation, but likewise "from the inward witness, a spiritual seed of light "sown in the soul of every son of man, Jew, Turk, "or Pagan, as well as Christian, whose kindly sus- "citations whoever follows, will gradually perceive "increasing gleams still leading farther on to "nearer and far brighter advances, till at length a "full and perfect day bursts forth upon his ravished "eyes." In this single sentence, Sir, you bear the noblest testimony to all the doctrines in which Mr. W. dissents from the Calvinists: You begin with **GENERAL REDEMPTION**, and end with **PERFEC-  
TION**; or, to use your own expression, you follow him "from the spiritual seed of light in a Turk," quite to the "full and perfect day, bursting forth upon the ravished eyes of the Pagan who follows the kindly suscitations" of divine grace.

And, far from making man a mere machine, you tell us, page 140, "It is true, that faith is the gift of God; but the exertions of that faith, when once given, lieth in ourselves." Mr. W. grants it, Sir; but permit me to tell you, that the word *ourselves* being printed in Italics, seems to convey rather more Anti-Calvinism than he holds; for he is persuaded that we cannot exert faith without a continual influence of the same divine power that produced it, it being evident upon the Gospel plan, that "without Christ we can do nothing." From

these and the like passages in your sermons, I conclude, Sir, that your charge of "dreadful heresy" does not rest upon these words: "We have leaned too much towards Calvinism." Pass we then to the next, in which Mr. W. begins to show wherein he has consented too much to the Calvinists.

"I. With regard to *man's faithfulness*. Our Lord himself taught us to use the expression; and we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, on his authority, that if a man 'is not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, God will not give him the true riches.' "

Now, where does the heresy lie here? Is it in the word *man's faithfulness*? Is there so much *faithfulness* to God and man among professors, that he must be *opposed* by all good men, who dares to use the bare word? Do *real Protestants* account "*man's faithfulness*" a grace of supererogation, and quoting Scripture an heresy? or do they slight what our Lord recommends in the plainest terms, and will one day reward in the most glorious manner? If not, why are they going to enter a protest against Mr. W., because he is "not ashamed of Christ and his words before an evil and adulterous generation," and will not "keep back" from his immense flock, any part of "*the counsel of God*,"—much less, a part that so many professors overlook, while some are daring enough to lampoon it, and others wicked enough to trample it under foot.

O, Sir, if Mr. W. is to be cast out of your synagogue, unless he *formally recant* the passage he has quoted, and which he says "we are not to be ashamed of;" what will you do to the Son of God who spoke it? what to St. Luke, who wrote it? and what to good Mr. Henry, who thus comments upon it?—"If we do not make a right use of the gifts of God's providence, how can we expect from him those present and future comforts which are

the gifts of his spiritual grace ? Our Saviour here compares these ; and shows, that though our faithful use of the things of this world cannot be thought to merit any favour at the hand of God, yet our unfaithfulness in the use of them may be justly reckoned a *forfeiture* of that grace which is necessary to bring us to glory. And that is it which our Saviour shows, Luke xvi. 10, 11, 12. He that is unjust, *unfaithful*, in the *least* ; is unjust, unfaithful also in *much*. The riches of this world are the *less* ; grace and glory are the *greater*. Now if we be unfaithful in the less, if we use the things of this world to other purposes than those to which they were given us, it may justly be feared we shall be so in the gifts of God's grace, that we shall receive them also in vain, and therefore they will be denied us. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. He that serves God and does good with his money, will serve God and do good with the more noble and valuable talents of wisdom and grace, and spiritual gifts, and the earnest of heaven : But he that buries the one talent of this world's wealth, will never improve the five talents of spiritual riches."

Thus speaks the honest commentator : And, whoever charges him with legality or heresy herein, I must express my approbation by a shout of applause. Hail Henry ! Hail Wesley ! Ye faithful servants of the most high God : Stand it out against an Antinomian world ! Hail, ye followers of the despised Galilean ! You "confess him and his words before a perverse generation : He will confess you before his Father and his angels." Let not the scoffs, let not the accusations, even of good people, led by the tempter appearing as an angel of light, make you give up one jot or tittle of your Lord's Gospel. Though thousands should combine to brand you as Legalists, Papists, Heretics, and Antichrists, stand it out : Scripture, conscience,

and Jesus, are on your side: "Be not afraid of their terror; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." And when you shall have *occupied* a little longer, and been a little more abused by your mistaken companions, your Master will come and find you employed in serving his family, and not in "beating your fellow servants." And while the unprofitable, unfaithful, quarrelsome servant is cast out, he will address you with a "Well done, good and faithful servants: Ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you rulers over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Excuse the length of this address: It dropped from me before I was aware, and is the fruit of the joy I feel to see "the John Goodwin of the age," and the oracle of the Calvinists, so fully agree to maintain the Christian *heresy* against the Antinomian orthodoxy. Nay, and you yourself are of the very same way of thinking. For you tell us, (page 89,) "that God so far approved of the advancees Cornelius had made towards him," (by praying and giving, as you had observed before, much alms to the people,) "under the slender light offered him; of his earnest desire of a still nearer and more intimate acquaintance with him; and of the improvements he had made of the small talent he had committed to him, that he was now about to entrust him with greater and far better treasures."

In the mouth of two such witnesses as Mr. Henry and yourself, Mr. W.'s doctrine might be established; but as I fear that some of our friends will soon look upon you both as tainted with his heresy, I shall produce some plain Scripture instances, to prove, by the strongest of all arguments, *matter of fact*, that man's "unfaithfulness in the mamon of unrighteousness" is attended with the worst of consequences.

You know, Sir, what destruction this sin brought

upon Achan, and, by his means, upon Israel : And you remember how Saul's avarice, and his " flying upon the spoil" of the Amalekites, cost him his kingdom, together with the divine blessing. You will, perhaps, object that " they forfeited only temporal mercies :" True, if they repented ; but if their sin sealed up the hardness of their heart, then they lost all.

I can, however, mention two who indisputably forfeited both spiritual and eternal blessings :—The one is the moral young man, whose fatal attachment to wealth is mentioned in the Gospel. " Go," said our Lord to him, " sell all thou hast, give to the poor, come, follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." He was " unfaithful in the mammon of unrighteousness ;" he would not comply with the proposal; and though Jesus loved him, yet he stood firm to his word, he did not " give him the true riches :" The unhappy wretch chose to have his good things in this world, and so lost them in the next.

The other instance is Judas ; " he left all," at first, " to follow Jesus ;" but when the devil placed him upon the high mountain of temptation, and showed him the horrors of poverty and the alluring wealth of this world, covetousness, his besetting sin, prevailed again : And as he carried the bag, he turned thief, and made a private purse. You know, Sir, that " the love of money" proved to him " the root of all evil," and that on account of his " unfaithfulness in the mammon of unrighteousness," our Lord not only did " not give him the true riches," but took his every talent from him, his apostleship on earth, and one of the twelve thrones which he had promised him in common with the other disciples.

Some, I know, will excuse Judas by fathering his crime and damnation upon the decrees of God. But we, who are not numbered among *real Pro-*

*testants*, think that sinners are reprobated as they are elected, that is, says St. Peter, “according to the foreknowledge of God:” We are persuaded, that because God’s knowledge is *infinite*, he foreknows future contingencies; and we think, we should insult both his holiness and his omniscience, if we did not believe that he could both foresee and foretel that Judas would be unfaithful without necessitating him to be so, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled: We assert then, that as Jesus loved the poor covetous young man, so he loved his poor covetous disciple; for had he hated him, he must have acted the base part of a dissembler, by showing him for years as much love as he did the other Apostles;—an idea too horrid for a Christian to entertain, I shall not say of “God made flesh,” but even of a man that has any sincerity or truth. Judas’s damnation, therefore, and the ruin of the young man, according to the second axiom in the Gospel, were merely of themselves, by their unbelief and “unfaithfulness in the mammon of unrighteousness:” For “how could they believe,” seeing they reposed their “trust in uncertain riches!”

Thus, Sir, both the express declaration of our Lord, and the plain histories of the Scripture, agree to confirm this fundamental principle in Christianity, that when God works upon man, he expects faithfulness from man; and that when man, as a moral agent, grieves and quenches the Spirit, that strives to make him faithful, temporal and eternal ruin are the inevitable consequence.

Thus far, then, the Minutes contain a great, evangelical truth, and not a shadow of heresy. Let us see whether the dreadful snake lurks under the Second Proposition.

“ II. We have leaned too much towards Calvinism, (2.) With regard to *working for life*. This, also, our Lord has expressly commanded us. ‘Labour’ (*Εργαζεσθε*, literally, *work*,) ‘for the

meat that endureth to everlasting life.' And, in fact, every believer, till he comes to glory, works *for* as well as *from* life."

Here Mr. W. strikes at a fatal mistake of all Antinomians, many honest Calvinists, and not a few who are Arminians in sentiment and Calvinists in practice. All these, when they see that man is by nature dead in trespasses and sins, lie easy in the mire of iniquity, idly waiting till by an irresistible act of Omnipotence, God pulls them out without any striving on their part. Multitudes uncomfortably stick here, and will probably continue to do so, till they receive and heartily embrace that part of the Gospel which is now, alas !, called *heresy*. Then shall these poor prisoners in giant Despair's castle, find the key of their dungeon about them, and perceive that "the word is nigh them," yea, "in their mouth and in their heart ; stirring up the gift of God within them," and "in hope believing against hope," they will happily "lay hold on eternal life," and "apprehend," by the confidence of faith, "him that has apprehended them" by convictions of sin.

But now, instead of imitating Lazarus, who, when the Lord had called him, and restored life to his putrefying body, *came forth* out of his grave, though he was *bound hand and foot* ; these mistaken men indolently wait till the Lord drags them out, not considering that it is more than he has promised to do. On the contrary, he reproves, by his prophet, those that "do not stir themselves up to lay hold on him ;" and deciding the point himself, says, "Turn ye at my reproof ; behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you ; because I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hands unto you and no man regarded, I will mock when your fear cometh."

Should you object, that "the case is not similar, because the Lord gave life to the dead body of Lazarus, whereas our souls are dead in sin by

nature." True, Sir, *by nature*; but does not *grace reign* to control nature? And "as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, is not the free gift come upon all men to justification of life?" According to the promise made to our first parents, and of course to all men then contained in their loins, is not "the Seed of the woman *always nigh*," both to reveal and "bruise the serpent's head?" Is not Christ "the light of men,—the light of the world,—come into the world?" Shineth he not in the darkness of our nature, even when the darkness comprehends him not? And is not this "light the life," the spiritual "life of men?" Can this be denied, if the "light is Christ," and if "Christ is the resurrection and the life," who came that "we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly?"

In this scriptural view of free grace, what room is there for the ridiculous cavil, that "Mr. W. wants the dead to work for life?" God, of his infinite mercy in Jesus Christ, gives to *poor sinners* naturally dead in sin, *a talent* of free, preventing, quickening grace, which "reproves them of sin;" and when it is followed, "of righteousness and judgment." This, which some Calvinists call *common grace*, is granted to all without any respect of persons; so that even the poor Jew Herod, if he had not preferred the smiles of his Herodias to the convincing light of Christ, which shone in his conscience, would have been saved as well as John the Baptist; and that poor Heathen Felix, if he had not hardened his heart in the day of his visitation, would have sweetly experienced that Christ had as much tasted death for him as he did for St. Paul. The living light visited them; but they, not "working while it was day," or refusing to "cut off the right hand" which the Lord called for, fell at last into that "night wherein no man can work: Their

candlestick was removed, their lamp went out." They quenched their "smoking flax;" or, in other words, *their talent unimproved* was "justly taken from them." Thus, though once through grace they could work, they died while they lived; and so were, as says St. Jude, *twice dead*, dead in Adam by that sentence, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" and dead in themselves, by personally renouncing Christ the life, or rejecting the light of his convincing Spirit.

This being premised, I ask, Where is the heresy in this paragraph of the Minutes? Does it consist in quoting a plain passage out of one of our Lord's sermons? or in daring to produce in the original, under the horrible form of the decagrammaton, Εργαζεσθε, that dreadful tetragrammaton, *work?* Surely, Sir, you have too much piety to maintain the former, and too much good sense to assert the latter. Does it consist in saying that *believers work from life?* (For of such only Mr. W. here speaks.) Do not all grant that "he who believeth hath life," yea, "everlasting life," and therefore can work? And have not I proved from Scripture, that the very Heathens are not without some light and grace to work suitably to their dispensation?

"The heresy," say you, "does not consist in asserting that the believer works *from*, but *for* life." Does it indeed? Then the Lord Jesus is the *heretic*; for Mr. W. only repeats what He spoke above 1700 years ago: "Labour," says he, (Εργαζεσθε,) "work for the meat that endureth to everlasting life." Enter, therefore, *your protest against* St. John's Gospel, if Christ will not *formally recant it*; and not against the Minutes of his servant, who dares not "take away from his Lord's words," for fear "God should take away his part out of the book of life!"

But if the Son of God be an heretic for putting the unbelieving Jews upon *working* by that dread-

ful word, (*Ἐργάζεσθαι*,) St. Paul is undoubtedly an arch-heretic, for corroborating it by a strong preposition: *Κατέργαζεσθαι*, says he to the Philippians, "work out;" —and what is most astonishing, "work out your own salvation." "Your own salvation!" Why, Paul, this is even worse than working *for life*; for *salvation* implies a deliverance from all guilt, sin, and misery; together with obtaining the life of grace here, and the life of glory hereafter. Ah! poor legal Apostle, what a pity is it, thou didst not live in our Evangelical age! Some by explaining to thee the mystery of "finished salvation," or by "protesting in a body against thy dreadful heresy," might have saved "the fundamental doctrines of Christianity;" and the John Goodwin of the age would not have had thee to bear him out in his pharisaical and papistical delusions!

Here you reply, that "St. Paul gives God all the glory, by maintaining that "it is he who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And does not Mr. W. do the same? Has he not, for near forty years, steadily asserted, that all power to think a good thought, much more to will or do a good work, is from God, by mere grace, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and the agency of the Holy Spirit? If any dare to deny it, myriads of witnesses who have heard him preach, and thousands of printed sermons, hymns, and tracts, dispersed through the three kingdoms, will prove it.

But let us come closer to the point. Is not Christ "the bread that came down from heaven to give life to the world?" Is he not the "meat that endureth to everlasting life?" —*the meat which he directs even to the poor Capernaites to work for?* Must we not *come* to him for that meat? Is not *coming* to Christ, a *work* of the heart? yea, *the work of God?* the work that God peculiarly calls for? (John vi. 28, 29.) Does not our Lord complain of those who will not work for life? that

is, "come unto him that they might have life," or "that they might have it more abundantly?" And must not every believer *do this work*;—come to Christ for life, yea and live upon him every day and every hour?

Again, Sir, consider those Scriptures, "He that believeth hath everlasting life:—He that hath the Son hath life." Compare them with the following complaint, "None stirreth up himself to lay hold on God;" and with the charge of St. Paul to Timothy, "Lay hold on eternal life;" and let us know, whether "stirring up one's self to day hold on the God of our life," and actually "laying hold on eternal life," are not *works*, and *works for*, as well as *from life*; and whether believers are dispensed from these works till they come to glory?

Once more: Please to tell us, if praying, using ordinances, running a race, taking up the cross, keeping under the body, wrestling, fighting a good fight, are not *works*; and if all believers are not to do them, till death brings them a discharge. If you say, that "they do them *from life*, and not *for life*," you still point-blank oppose our Lord's express declaration.

A similar instance will make you sensible of it. Lot flies out of Sodom. How many *wrks* does he do at once! He hearkens to God's messengers, obeys their voice, sacrifices his property, forsakes all, prays, runs, and *escapes for his life*. "No," says one, wiser than seven men who can render a reason, "you should not say, that he escapes *for life*, but *from life*: Do not hint, that he runs 'to preserve his life;'" you should say that he does it 'because he is alive.'" What an admirable distinction is this!

Again: My friend is consumptive. I send for a physician, who prescribes, "he must ride out every day *for his life*." Some other physicians see the prescription, and by printed letters raise all the gentlemen of the faculty, to insist, in a body, on a

formal reenactment of this dreadful prescription ; declaring the health of thousands is at stake, if we say that consumptive people are to ride *for* life, as well as *from* life. *Risum teneatis, amici?*

But they who protest against Mr. W. for maintaining that we ought to work *for*, as well as *from* life, must protest also against a body of Puritan Divines, who, in the last century, being shocked at Dr. Crisp's doctrine, thus bore their testimony against it :—“ To say salvation is not the end of any good work we do, or, we are to act *from* life, and not *for* life, were to abandon the human nature ; it were to teach us to violate the great precepts of the gospel ; it supposes one bound to do more for the salvation of others, than our own ; it were to make all the threatenings of eternal death, and promises of eternal life in the gospel, useless, as motives to shun the one, or obtain the other ; and it makes the scripture-characters and commendation of the most eminent saints, a fault : For they all escaped out of Sodom or Babylon for their lives ; they all wrestled for, and laid hold on eternal life.” *Preface to Mr. Flavel's book against Antinomianism.* Thus, Sir, the very Calvinists were ashamed, a hundred years ago, of the grand Crispian tenet that we ought not to work for life.

And I am glad to find, you are as far from this error as they were ; for you tell us in your Sermons, page 69, that “ the gracious end of Christ's coming into the world, was to give eternal life to those who were *dead* in sins ; and that eternal life does consist in ‘ knowing the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.’ ” You assure us next, that this life begins by an “ exploring desire ; ” and that God, by giving it, “ only means to be earnestly sought, that he may be more successfully and more happily found.”

Perhaps some suppose the expression of working *for* life, implies the working in order to *merit* or *purchase* life. But as our Lord's words convey no

such idea, so Mr. W. takes care positively to exclude it, by those words, "Not by the merit of works :" For he knows that "eternal life is the gift of God ;" and yet with St. Paul he says, "Labour to enter into the rest, lest ye fall after the example of Israel's unbelief ;" and with the great Anti-Crispian Divine, Jesus Christ, he cries aloud, "Strive" to walk "in the narrow way ;—agonize to enter in at the strait gate that leads to life."

I pass to the third instance which he produces of his having leaned too much towards Calvinism.

"III. We have received it as a maxim, that a man is 'to do nothing in order to justification : ' Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God, should 'cease from evil, and learn to do well.' Whoever repents, should 'do works meet for repentance.' And if this be not *in order* to find favour, what does he do them for ?"

To do Mr. W. justice, it is necessary to consider what he means by justification. And first, he does not mean that general benevolence of our merciful God towards sinful mankind, whereby, through the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, he casts a propitious look upon them, and freely makes them partakers of "the light that enlightens every man that cometh into the world." This general loving-kindness is certainly previous to any thing we can do to find it; for it always prevents us, saying to us in our very infancy, *Live*; and when we turn from the paths of life, still crying, "Why will ye die?" In consequence of this general mercy, our Lord says, "Let little children come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Much less does Mr. W. understand what Dr. Crisp calls "eternal justification," which, because I do not see it in the Scripture, I shall say nothing of.

But the justification he speaks of, as something that we must "find," and, "in order to which, something must be done," is either that public and

final justification which our Lord mentions in the Gospel, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned;" and in this sense no man in his wits will find fault with Mr. W.'s assertion; as it is evident that we must absolutely "do something," that is, speak good words, in order to be "justified by our words." Or he means forgiveness, and the witness of it; that wonderful transaction of the Spirit of God in a returning prodigal's conscience, by which the forgiveness of his sin is proclaimed to him through the blood of sprinkling.—This is what Mr. W. and St. Paul generally mean. It is thus, that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And now, do not Scripture, common sense, and experience, show that "something must be done in order to *attain* or *find*," though not to *merit* and *purchase*, this justification?

Please to answer the following questions, founded upon the express declarations of God's word:—"To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Is *ordering our conversation aright*, doing nothing?—"Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Are *repentance* and *conversion* nothing?—"Come unto me, all ye that are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest;" I will justify you. Is *coming*, doing nothing?—"Cease to do evil: Learn to do well. Come now, let us reason together; and though your sins be red as crimson, they shall be white as snow;" You shall be justified. Is *ceasing to do evil*, and *learning to do well*, doing nothing?—"Seek the Lord while he may be found: Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Is *seeking*, *calling*, *forsaking one's*

*way, and returning to the Lord, a mere nothing?—“ Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:” Yea, take the kingdom of heaven by force. Is seeking, asking, knocking, and taking by force, doing absolutely nothing?—Please to answer these questions; and when you have done, I will throw one or two hundred more of the like kind in your way.*

Let us now see whether reason is not for Mr. W., as well as Scripture. Do you not maintain that *believing* is necessary in order to our justification?" If you do, you subscribe Mr. W.'s heresy; for *believing* is not only doing *something*, but necessarily supposes *a variety of things*. "Faith cometh by hearing," and sometimes by reading, which implies attending the ministry of the word, and searching the Scriptures, as the Bereans did. It likewise presupposes, at least, the attention of the mind, and consent of the heart, to a revealed truth; or the consideration, approbation, and receiving of an object proposed to us. Nay, it implies renouncing worldly, and seeking divine, honour: For, says our Lord, "How can you believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh of God only?" And if none can believe in Christ unto salvation, but those who give up seeking worldly honours, by a parity of reason, they must give up following fleshly lusts, and putting their trust in uncertain riches: In a word, they must own themselves sick, and renounce their physicians of no value, before they can make one true application to the invaluable Physician. What a variety of things is, therefore, implied in "*believing*," which we cannot but acknowledge to be previous to justification! Who can then, consistently with reason, blame Mr. W. for saying, "*Something* must be done in order to justification?"

Again: If nothing be required of us in order to

justification, who can find fault with those that die in a state of condemnation? They were “born in sin, and children of wrath,” and nothing was required of them in order to find favour: It remains, therefore, that they are—damned, through an absolute decree made; made thousands of years before they had any existence! If some can swallow this camel with the greatest ease, I doubt, Sir, it will not go down with *you*, without bearing very hard upon the knowledge you have of the God of love, and the Gospel of Jesus.

Once more: Mr. W. concludes his proposition with a very pertinent question:—“When a man, that is not justified, ‘does works meet for repentance,’ *what does he do them for?*” Permit me to answer it according to Scripture and common sense. If he do them in order to *purchase* the divine favour, he is under a self-righteous delusion; but if he do them, as Mr. W. says, “in order to *find*” what Christ hath purchased for him, he acts the part of a wise Protestant.

Should you say that such a penitent does “works meet for repentance,” from a sense of gratitude for redeeming love: I answer, this is impossible; for that “love must be shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him,” in consequence of his justification, before he can act from the sense of that love and the gratitude which it excites. I hope it is no heresy to maintain, that the cause must go before the effect. I conclude, then, that those who have not yet found the pardoning love of God, do works meet for repentance, “in order to *find* it.” They abstain from those outward evils which once they pursued; they do the outward good which the convincing Spirit prompts them to; they use the means of grace, confess their sins, and ask pardon for them; in short, they “seek” the Lord, encouraged by that promise, “They that seek me early shall find me.” And Mr. W. sup-

poses they seek “in order to find :” In the name of candour, where is the harm of that supposition ?

When the poor woman has lost her “piece of silver, she lights a candle,” says our Lord, she “sweeps the house, and searches diligently till she find it.” Mr. W. asks, “If she do not do all this in order to find it, what does she do it for ?” At this the alarm is taken, and the post carries through various provinces, printed letters against old Mordecai ; and a Synod is called together, to *protest* against the dreadful error !

This reminds me of a little anecdote :—Some centuries ago, one Virgilius, (I think,) a German Bishop, was bold enough to look over the walls of ignorance and superstition, which then inclosed all Europe ; and he saw that, if the earth was round, there must be antipodes. Some minutes of his observations were sent to the Pope. His Holiness, who understood Geography as much as Divinity, took fright, fancying the unheard-of assertion was injurious to the very fundamental principles of Christianity. He directly called together the Cardinals, as wise as himself ; and, by their advice, issued out a Bull, condemning the heretical doctrine ; and the poor Bishop was obliged to make a formal recantation of it, under pain of excommunication. Which are we to admire most ? the zeal of the Conclave, or that of the *real Protestants* ? In the mean time let me observe, that as all the Roman Catholics do now acknowledge, that there are antipodes, so all real Protestants will one day acknowledge, that penitents seek the favour of God *in order to find it* ; unless some rare genius should be able to demonstrate, that it is *in order to lose it*.

Having defended Mr. W.’s third proposition from Scripture and common sense, permit me to do it also from experience. And here I might appeal to the most established persons in Mr. W.’s societies ; but as their testimony may have little weight with

you, I wave it, and appeal to all the accounts of *sound* conversions that have been published since Calvin's days. Show me one, Sir, wherein it appears that a mourner in Sion found the above-described justification, without *doing* some previous "works meet for repentance." If you cannot produce one such instance, Mr. W.'s doctrine is supported by the *printed experiences* of all the converted Calvinists, as well as of all the believers in his own societies. Nor am I afraid to appeal even to the experience of your own friends. If any one of these can say, with a good conscience, that he found the above-described justification without first stopping in the career of outward sin, without praying, seeking, and confessing his guilt and misery, I promise to give up the Minutes. But if none can make such a declaration, you must grant, Sir, that experience is on Mr. W.'s side, as much as reason, revelation, the best Calvinists, and yourself. I say *yourself*:

Give me leave to produce but one instance:— Page 76 of your Sermons, you address those "who see themselves destitute of that knowledge of God which is eternal life," the very same thing that Mr. W. calls Justification; and which you define, "A home-felt knowledge of God by the experience of his 'love' being 'shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us: The Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God;'" and you recommend to them "to seek and press after it." Now, Sir, *seeking* and *pressing* after it, is certainly "doing something in order to find it."

I must not conclude my Vindication of the third proposition, without answering a specious objection: "If we must do *something* in order to justification, farewell *free* justification! It is no more of grace, but of works, and consequently of debt. The middle wall of partition between the Church of

Rome and the Church of England is pulled down; and the two sticks, in the hands of that heretical juggler, J. W., are become one."

I reply, 1. That some who think they are *real* pillars in the *Protestant* Church, may be nearer the Church of Rome than they are aware of; for Rome is far more remarkable for lording it over God's heritage, and calling the most faithful servants of God heretics, than even for her pharisaic exalting of good works.—2. If the Church of Rome had not insisted upon the necessity of *unrequired, unprofitable and foolish* works; and if she had not arrogantly ascribed *saving merit* to works, yea, to merely external performances, and by that means clouded the merits of Christ; no reasonable Protestant would have separated from her on account of her regard for works.—3. Nothing could be more absurd than to affirm, that, when "something is required to be done in order to receive a favour, the favour loses the name of a free gift, and directly becomes a debt." Long, too long, persons who have more honesty than wisdom, have been frightened from the plain path of duty by a phantom of their own making. O may the snare break at last!—And why should it not break now? Have not sophisms been wire-drawn, till they break of themselves in the sight of every attentive spectator?

I say to two beggars, "Hold out your hand; here is an alms for you." The one complies, and the other refuses. Who in the world will dare to say, that my charity is no more a *free gift*, because I bestow it only upon the man that held out his hand? Will nothing make it *free* but my wrenching his hand open, or forcing my bounty down his throat? Again, the King says to four rebels, "Throw down your arms; surrender, and you shall have a place both in my favour and at court." One of them obeys, and becomes a great man; the others, upon refusal, are caught and hanged: What sophis-

try will face me down, that the pardon and place of the former are not *freely* bestowed upon him, because he did something in order to obtain them? Once more :

The God of Providence says, "If you plough, sow, harrow, fence, and weed your fields, I will give the increase, and you shall have a crop." Farmers obey : And are they to believe, that because they do so many things towards their harvest, it is *not the free gift* of Heaven? Do not all those who fear God, know that their ground, seed, cattle, strength, yea, and their very life, are the gifts of God? Does not this prevent their claiming a crop as a *debt*; and make them confess, that though it was suspended on their ploughing, &c., it is the unmerited bounty of Heaven?

Apply this, Sir, to the present case, and you will see that our *doing something in order to justification*, does not in the least hinder it from being a *free gift*; because whatever we do in order to it, we do it *by the grace of God* preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will; all being of free, most absolutely free grace, through the merits of Christ.—And nevertheless, so sure as a farmer, in the appointed ways of Providence, shall have no harvest if he do nothing towards it; a professor in the appointed ways of grace (let him *talk* of finished salvation all the year round) shall go without justification and salvation, unless he do something towards them. "He that now goeth on his way weeping," says the Psalmist, "and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him." "Be not deceived," says the Apostle, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; and he *only* that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." David, therefore, and St. Paul must be proved enemies to free grace, before Mr. W. can be represented as

such ; for they both *sowed in tears* before they *reaped in joy* ; their doctrine and experience went hand in hand together.

Having now vindicated the three first propositions of the Minutes, levelled at three dangerous tenets of Dr. Crisp ; and shown, that not only yourself, Sir, but moderate Calvinists are (so far) entirely of Mr. W.'s sentiment ; I remain, Hon. and Rev. Sir,

Your obedient Servant, in the bond of  
a free and peaceful Gospel,  
J. FLETCHER.

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## LETTER IV.

HONOURED AND REV. SIR,

If the three first propositions of the Minutes are scriptural, Mr. W. may well begin the remaining part, by desiring the Preachers in his connexion to emerge, along with him, from under the noisy billows of prejudice, and to struggle quite out of the muddy streams of Antinomian delusions, which have so long gone over our heads, and carried so many souls down the channels of vice, into the “lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.” Well may he entreat them to “review the whole affair.”

And why should this modest request alarm any one ? Though error dreads a revisal, truth, you know, cannot but gain by it.

I. Mr. W. says in this review, “Who is now accepted of God ? He that now believes in Christ with a loving, obedient heart.” Excellent answer ! worthy of St. Paul and St. James ; for it sums up in one line the Epistles of both. In the first part of it, (“he that now believes in Christ,”) you see St. Paul’s Gospel calculated for lost sinners, who now flee from the Babel of self-righteousness and

sin, and find "all things" in Christ "ready" for their reception. And in the second part, ("with a loving and obedient heart,") you see the strong bulwark raised by St. James, to guard the truth of the Gospel against the attacks of Antinomian and Laodicean professors. Had he said, "He that shall believe the next hour is *now* accepted," he would have bestowed upon present unbelief the blessing that is promised to present faith. Had he said, "He that believed a year ago, is now accepted of God," he would have opened the kingdom of heaven to apostates, contrary to St. Paul's declarations to the Hebrews. He therefore very properly says, *He that now believes*; for it is written, "He that believeth," (not he that *shall* believe, or he that *did* believe) "hath everlasting life."

What fault can you find with Mr. W. here? Surely you cannot blame him for proposing Christ as the object of the Christian's faith, or for saying that the *believer* hath a loving and obedient heart; for he speaks of the *accepted* man, and not of him who *comes for acceptance*. Multitudes, alas! rest satisfied with an *unloving, disobedient* faith,—a faith that engages only the head, but has nothing to do with the *heart*;—a faith that works by malice, instead of *working by love*;—a faith that pleads for sin in the heart, instead of purifying the heart from sin;—a faith that St. Paul explodes, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. and that St. James compares to a carcass, chap. ii. 26. There is no need that Mr. W. should countenance such a faith by his Minutes. Too many, alas! do it by their lives; and God grant none may do it by their sermons. Whoever does, Sir, it is not you; for you tell us in your's, page 150, that "Christ is to be found only by living faith; even a faith that worketh by love; even a faith that layeth hold on Christ by the feet, and worshippeth him;"—the very faith of Mary Magdalen, who certainly had a "loving and obedient heart," for

our Lord testified that “she loved much;” and ardent love cannot but be zealously *obedient*. There is not the least shadow of heresy, but the very marrow of the Gospel, in this article. Let us see whether the second is equally defensible.

II. “But who among those that never heard of Christ? He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, according to the light he has.”

And where is the error here? Did not St. Peter begin his evangelical sermon to Cornelius by these very words, prefaced by some others that make them remarkably emphatical? “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.” Surely, Sir, you will never insist upon a formal recantation of a plain scripture!

But perhaps you object to those words which Mr. W. has added to St. Peter’s declaration, “according to the light he hath.” What! should it be, “according to the light he has *not*? ” Are not there people now among us who follow the wicked servant that intimated his Lord “was an hard and austere man, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strewed?” Must Mr. W. increase the number? Or would you have him insinuate that God is more cruel than Pharaoh, who granted the poor Israelites *day-light*, if he allowed them no straw to make bricks;—that he requires an Heathen to work without any degree of *light*, without a *day* of visitation, in the Egyptian darkness of a merely natural state?—and that he will then damn and torment him everlasting, either for not doing, or for marring his work? O Sir, like yourself, Mr. W. is too evangelical to entertain such notions of the God of Love.

“At this rate,” say some, “an Heathen may be saved without a Saviour; his fearing God and working righteousness will go for the blood and

righteousness of Christ." Mr. W. has no such thought: Whenever an Heathen is accepted, it is merely through the merits of Christ; although it is in consequence of his "fearing God and working righteousness." "But how comes he to see that God is to be feared, and that righteousness is his delight?" Because a beam of our Sun of Righteousness shines in his darkness. All is therefore of grace; the light, the works of righteousness done by that light, and acceptance in consequence of them. How much more evangelical is this doctrine of St. Peter, than that of some Divines, who consign all the Heathens by millions to hell torments, because they cannot explicitly believe in a Saviour, whose name they never heard! Nay, and in whom it would be the greatest arrogance to believe, if he never died for them! Is it not possible that Heathens should, by grace, reap some blessings through Adam the Second, though they know nothing of his name and obedience unto death; when they, by nature, reap so many curses through Adam the first, to whose name and disobedience they are equally strangers? If this be an *heresy*, it is such an one as does honour to Jesus and humanity.

**SECOND OBJECTION.**—"Mr. W., by allowing the possibility of a righteous Heathen's salvation, goes point-blank against the Eighteenth Article of our Church, which he has solemnly subscribed."

**ANSWER.**—This assertion is groundless. Mr. W., far from presuming to say that an Heathen "can be saved by the law, or sect that he professes, if he frame his life according to the light of nature," cordially believes that all the Heathens who are saved, are saved through the name, that is, through the merit and Spirit, of Christ; by framing their life, not according to I-know-not-what light, naturally received from fallen Adam, but according to the supernatural light which

Christ graciously affords them, in the dispensation they are under.

THIRD OBJECTION.—“ However, if he do not impugn the Eighteenth Article, he does the Thirteenth, which says, that ‘ works done before justification, or before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, forasmuch as they proceed not from faith in Christ, are not pleasant to God ; yea, have the nature of sin.’ ”

Nay, this Article does not affect Mr. W.’s doctrine ; for he constantly maintains, that if the works of a Melchisedee, a Job, a Plato, a Cornelius, are accepted, it is only because they follow the general justification above-mentioned ; (which is possibly what St. Paul calls the “ free gift that comes upon all men to justification of life,” Rom. v. 18;) and because they proceed from “ the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit,” they are not, therefore, done before that grace and inspiration, as are the works which the Article condemns.

FOURTH OBJECTION.—“ But ‘ all that is not of faith is sin ;’ and ‘ without faith it is impossible to please God.’ ”

ANSWER.—True ; therefore, “ he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Cornelius had, undoubtedly, this faith ; and a degree of it is found in all sincere Heathens. For Christ, the light of men, visits all, though in a variety of degrees and dispensations. He said to the carnal Jews that believed not on him, “ Yet a little while the light is with you ; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you : While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light.” All the Heathens that are saved, are then saved by an implicit faith in Jesus, “ the light of the world ;” or, to use our Lord’s own words, by “ believing in the light” of the dispensation, before the day of their visitation is past,

before total darkness comes upon them, even the night “when no man can work.”

FIFTH OBJECTION.—“But if Heathens can be saved without the Gospel, what need is there of the Christian dispensation?”

ANSWER.—1. None of them were ever saved without a beam of the internal light of the Gospel, which is preached “in (εν) every creature under heaven.” (Col. i. 23.) 2. The argument may be retorted: If sinners could be saved under the Patriarchal dispensation, what need was there of the Mosaic? If under the Mosaic, what need of John’s baptism? If under the baptism of John, what need of Christianity? Or, to answer by a comparison: If we can see our way by star-light, what need is there of moon-shine? If by moon-shine, what need of the dawn of day? If by the dawn of day, what need of the rising sun?

The brightness of divine dispensations, like the light of the righteous, “shines more and more unto the perfect day.” And though an Heathen may be saved in his low dispensation, and attain unto a low degree of glory, which the Apostle compares to the shining of a star, (for “in my Father’s house,” says Christ, “there are many mansions,”) yet it is an unspeakable advantage to be saved from the darkness attending his uncomfortable dispensation, into the full enjoyment of the life and “immortality brought to light by the [explicit] Gospel.” Well might, then, the angel say to Cornelius, who was already accepted according to his dispensation, that Peter should “tell him words whereby he should be saved;”—saved from the weakness, darkness, bondage, and tormenting fears attending his present state, into that blessed state of light, comfort, liberty, power, and glorious joy, in which “he that is feeble is as David, and the house of David as God,” or “as the angel of the Lord.”

Having thus briefly answered the objections that

are advanced against St. Peter's and Mr. W.'s doctrine, proceed we to the third query, in the review of the whole affair.

"III. Is this the same with, *He that is sincere?*  
—Nearly, if not quite."

In the name of charity, where is the error of this answer? Where the shadow of heresy? Do you suppose, by—"he that is sincere," Mr. W. means a carnal, unawakened wretch, who boasts of his imagined sincerity? No, Sir, he means one who, in God's account, and not barely in his own, sincerely and uprightly follows the light of his dispensation. Now, if you expose Mr. W. as guilty of heresy, for using this word once, what protests will you enter against St. Paul, for using it over and over? How will you blame him for desiring the Ephesians (according to the fine reading of our margin) to "be sincere in love!" (*αληθευοντες εν αγαπῃ:*)—Or, for wishing nothing greater to his dear Philippians, than that they might be "sincere in the day of Christ!" O, Sir, to fear, and much more to love, the Lord *in sincerity*, is a great and rare thing. (Eph. vi. 24.) We find every where too much of the "old leaven of malice," and too little of "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. v. 8.) Think not, therefore, that Mr. W. betrays the cause of God, because he thinks that "to be sincere," and to "fear God and work righteousness," are expressions nearly, if not quite, synonymous.

But you do not perhaps find fault with Mr. W. for setting accepted Heathens too low, but too high, by giving them the character of being sincere; for you know that our translators render the Hebrew word חֲמִימָה sometimes *sincere*, at others *upright*, *undefiled*, and most commonly *perfect*. As in these sentences: "Noah was a perfect man;" "Job was a perfect man," &c. May not then Mr. W. secretly bring in his abominable doctrine of *Perfection*,

under the less frightful expression of sincerity?— Of this more by and by.

In the mean time, I shall close my Vindication of the second and third query, by the sentiments of two unquestionable *Protestants* on the present subject. The one is Mr. Henry, in his comment on St. Peter's words:—"God," says he, "never did, nor ever will, reject an honest Gentile, who fears and worships him, and works righteousness, i. e., is just and charitable towards all men, who lives up to the light he has, in a sincere devotion, and regular conversation. Wherever God finds an *upright* man, he will be found an *upright* God. (Psalm xviii. 25.) And those that have not the knowledge of Christ, and therefore cannot have an explicit regard to him, may yet receive grace for his sake, to 'fear God and work righteousness;' and wherever God gives grace to do so, as he did to Cornelius, he will, through Christ, accept the work of his own hands." Here, Sir, you have the very doctrine of Mr. W. quite down to the heretical word "sincere."

The other Divine, Sir, is yourself. You tell us, in your Sermon on the same text, that "we cannot but admire and adore God's universal tenderness and pity for every people and nation under heaven, in that 'he willeth not the death of any single sinner,' but accepteth every one into Gospel-covenant with him, 'who feareth him and worketh righteousness' according to the light imparted to him."

Now, Sir, where is the difference between your *orthodoxy* and Mr. W.'s *heresy*? He asserts, God accepts "him that *fears God and works righteousness* according to the light he has;" and you, Sir, "him who *feareth God and worketh righteousness* according to the light imparted to him." If Mr. W. must share the fate of Shadrach for his heresy, I doubt Mr. Henry will have that of Meshech, and

you, that of Abednego ; for you are all three in the same honourable condemnation.

But Mr. W., foreseeing that some would be offended at St. Peter's evangelical declaration, concerning the acceptance of sincere Heathens who work righteousness, proposes and answers the following objection :—

“ IV. Is not this salvation by works ?—Not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a *condition*? ”

In the former part of this answer, Mr. W. freely grants all you can require, to guard the Gospel against the Popish doctrine of making satisfaction for sin, and meriting salvation by works : For he maintains, that, though God accepts the Heathen who works righteousness, yet it is not through the merit of his works, but solely through that of Christ. Is not this the very doctrine of our Church in the Eleventh Article, which treats of Justification ? “ We are accounted righteous before God only for the *merit* of our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works, or *deservings*. ” Does not the opposition of the two sentences, and the explanatory word *deservings*, evidently show that “ works meet for repentance ” are not excluded from being in the sinner that comes to be justified, but from having any *merit* or worth to *purchase* his justification ?

Our Church expresses herself more fully on this head in the Homily on Salvation, to which the Article refers. “ St. Paul,” says she, “ declares nothing [necessary] on the behalf of man concerning his justification, but only a true and lively faith, and yet [N. B.] that faith does not shut out repentance, hope, love, [of desire when we are coming, love of delight when we are come,] dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with it in every man that is justified ; but it shutteth them out from the office of justifying ; so that they be all present in him that is justified ; yet they justify not alto-

gether." This is agreeable to St. Peter's doctrine, maintained by Mr. W. Only *faith in Christ* for Christians, and *faith in the light* of their dispensation for Heathens, is necessary in order to acceptance: but though *faith only* justifies, yet it is never alone; for repentance, hope, love of desire, and the fear of God, necessarily accompany this faith if it be living. Our Church, therefore, is not at all against works proceeding from, or accompanying faith in all its stages. She grants, that whether faith seeks or finds its object, whether it longs for, or embraces it, it is still a lively, active, and working grace. She is only against the vain conceit that works have any hand in *meriting* justification or *purchasing* salvation, which is what Mr. W. likewise strongly opposes.

If you say, that "his heresy does not consist in exploding the merit of works in point of salvation, but in using that legal expression, *salvation by works, as a condition;*" I answer, that, as I would not contend for the word *Trinity*, because it is not in the Bible; no, nor yet for the word *Perfection*, though it is there; neither would I contend for the expression, *salvation by works, as a condition:* But the *thing* Mr. W. means by it, is there in a hundred different turns and modes of expression. Therefore it is highly worth contending for: And so much the more, as it is, next to the doctrine of the Atonement, the most important part of "the faith once delivered unto the saints."

Any candid person acquainted with Mr. W.'s principles, (and for such only the Minutes were written,) cannot but see that he meant absolutely nothing but what our Saviour means, in these and the like Scriptures, namely, that salvation is suspended on a variety of things which Divines call by various names, and which Mr. W., with a majority of them, chooses to call *conditions*. "Except ye repent, ye shall all perish. Except ye be converted

and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Here *repentance* and *conversion* are conditions of eternal salvation.—" If ye believe not, ye shall die in your sins; for this is the work of God," the work that God requires and approves, " that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Here, the *work of faith* is the condition.—" I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates of the city." And here it is, *doing God's commandments*.

St. Paul, evangelical Paul, says the same thing in a variety of expressions :—" If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema." If *love*, the noblest work of the heart, do not take place, the fearful curse will.—" If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." *Spiritual mortification* is here the condition.—" Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Here *holiness* is the condition.—" Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor thieves, nor revilers, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Ceasing from *fornication, drunkenness, &c.*, is the same condition.

St. John is in the same condemnation as Mr. W.; for he declares, " There shall in no wise enter into the New Jerusalem any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Here the condition is, *not working abomination, &c.*—" Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life." Here the condition is, *ceasing from hatred*, the murder of the heart.

St. Peter is equally deep in the heresy. In a variety of expressions he describes the misery and fatal latter end of those " who escape the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and are again entangled therein,"

through the non-performance of this condition, “ If ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”

As for St. James, I need not quote him: You know, that when Luther was in his heat he could have found it in his heart to tear this precious Epistle from among the sacred books, and burn it as *an epistle of straw*. He thought the author of it was an enemy to *free grace*, an abettor of Popish tenets, an Antichrist. It is true, the scales of prejudice fell at last from his eyes; but, alas!, it was not till he had seen the Antinomian boar lay waste the Lord’s flourishing vineyard all over Protestant Germany: Then he was glad to draw against him St. James’s despised sword; and I shall be happily mistaken, Sir, if you are not obliged one day to make use of the *heretical Minutes*, as he did of the epistle of straw.

If any still urge, “ I do not love the word *condition*,” I reply, It is no wonder; since thousands so hate the thing, that they even choose to go to hell, rather than perform it. But let an old worthy Divine, approved by all but Crisp’s disciples, tell you what we mean by *condition*:—“ An antecedent condition,” says Mr. Flavel, in his *Discourse of Errors*, “ signifies no more than an act of ours; which, though it be neither perfect in any degree, nor in the least meritorious of the benefit conferred, nor performed in our own natural strength; is yet, according to the constitution of the covenant, required of us, in order to the blessings consequent thereupon, by virtue of the promise; and consequently, benefits and mercies granted in this order, are and must be suspended by the donor, till it be performed.” *Such a condition we affirm faith to be*, with all that faith necessarily implies.

When Dr. Crisp, in the last century, represented all the sober Puritan Divines as *legal*, they answered, “ The covenant, though conditional, is a dispensation of grace. There is grace in giving

ability to perform the condition, as well as in bestowing the benefits: God's enjoining the one in order to the other, makes not the benefit to be less of grace; but it is a display of God's wisdom, in conferring the benefit suitably to the nature and condition of men in this life, who are here in a state of trial; yea, the conditions are but a meetness to receive the blessings."

"The reason," added they, "why we use the word *condition*, is because it best suits with man's relation to God, in his present dealings with us, as his subjects on trial for eternity. Christ as a Priest has merited all: But as a priestly King he dispenses all: He enjoins the conditions in order to the benefits, and makes the benefits motives to our compliance with the conditions. He treats with men as his subjects, whom he will now *rule*, and hereafter *judge*. Now what word is so proper to express the duties as *enjoined means* of benefits, as the word *conditions*? The word *conditions* is of the same nature as *terms* of the Gospel. There are few authors of note, even of any persuasion, that scruple using this word in our sense, as Ames, Twisse, Rutherford, Hooker, Norton, Preston, Owen, Synod of New-England, the Assembly of Divines, &c. And none have reason to scruple it except such as think we are justified before we are born."—See *Gospel Truth vindicated*, by Williams, against Dr. Crisp.

If all the Protestant Divines who have directly or indirectly represented *repentance* and *faith* as *conditions of present salvation*; and *holiness of heart and life* as *conditions of eternal glory*, as things *sine quibus non*, without which salvation and glory neither can nor will follow:—If all those Divines, I say, are guilty of heresy, ninety-nine out of an hundred are heretics, and none of them deeper in the heresy than yourself.

In your Sermons, page 39, clearing yourself of

the slander that *you do not preach up, recommend, and insist on the necessity of good works*; you add, “I not only preach this or that part of the moral law, but I preach the whole moral law; and I tell you plainly, that if *you do not perform the whole will of God, you cannot be finally saved.*” Then you add, “Surely they who contend for the doctrine of works will be satisfied with this, or they are very unreasonable.” Indeed, Sir, Mr. W. is quite satisfied with it; I only wonder what in the world can make you so dissatisfied with his Minutes; for he never gave Antinomianism a more legal thrust.

And as you make *works* so absolutely necessary to eternal salvation, so do you make a *lute-work* an universal pre-requisite of present salvation. Speaking of the fear and dread that seize a sinner under convictions of sin, you say, page 111, “This inward shock of perturbation must pass upon the soul of every returning sinner more or less, before he can possibly be rendered a proper object of divine grace and mercy.” Hold, Sir, you go one step beyond Mr. W.; for he steadily maintains, that if the sinner were not a proper object of divine grace BEFORE he feels the inward shock you speak of, he would never be shocked and return.

Do not all unprejudiced persons see, that what Mr. W. calls *condition*, others call *way, means, or terms?*, &c., and that you have as little reason to pick a quarrel with him, as to raise a *body* of men against a quiet traveller, for calling a certain sum, a *guinea*, whereas you think it more proper to call it *one pound one,—twenty-one shillings,—forty-two sixpences,—or sixty-three groats.* O Sir, what reason have we to be ashamed of our chicaneries; and to beseech the Lord that they may not stumble the weak, and harden Infidels!

O how justly does Mr. W. ask next,  
“V. What have we then been disputing about

for these thirty years ? I am afraid, about words."

Pardon me, Sir, if here also I cannot, with you, cry, *Heresy !* Far from doing it, I admire the candour of an old man of God, who, instead of stiffly holding, and obstinately maintaining an old mistake, comes down as a little child, and freely acknowledges it before a respectable body of Preachers, whose esteem it is his interest to secure. O how many are there who look upon Mr. W. as a rotten threshold, and themselves as pillars in the temple of God, who would not own themselves mistaken for the world !

He says, "I am afraid we have disputed about words ;" perhaps he might have said, "I am very sure of it." How many disputes have been raised these thirty years among religious people, about those works of the heart which St. Paul calls "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ !" Some have called them the *only way* or *method* of receiving salvation ; others, the *means* of salvation ; others, the *terms* of it. Some have named them *duties* or *graces* necessary to salvation ; others, *conditions* of salvation ; others, *parts* of salvation, or *privileges* annexed to it ; while others have gone far round about, and used I-know-not-what far-fetched expressions, and ambiguous phrases to convey the same idea. I say the *same idea* ; for if all maintain, that, although *repentance* and *works meet for it*, and *faith working by love*, are not meritorious, they are nevertheless absolutely necessary, that they are a thing, *sine qua non*, all are agreed,) and if they *dispute*, it must be, as Mr. W. justly intimates, *about words*.

A comparison will at once make you sensible of it. A physician tells me, that *the way*, the *only way*, or *method* in which we live, is abstaining from poison, and taking proper food. "No," says another, "you should say, that abstaining from poison, and taking proper food, are the *means* by which our

life is preserved."—" You are quite mistaken," says a third, " rejecting poison and eating are the *terms* God hath fixed upon for our preservation."—" No," says a fourth, " they are *duties*, without the performance, or *blessings*, without the receiving of which we must absolutely die."—" I believe, for my part," says another, " that Providence hath engaged to preserve our life, *on condition* that we shall forbear taking poison, and eat proper food."—" You are all in the wrong, you know nothing at all of the matter," says another, who applauds himself much for his wonderful discovery, " turning from poison, and receiving nourishment, are the *exercises* of a living man, therefore they must absolutely be called *parts* of his life, or *privileges* annexed to it ; you quite take away people's appetite, and clog their stomach, by calling them *duties*, *terms*, *conditions* ; only call them *privileges* and you will see nobody will touch poison, and all will eat most heartily."—While they are all neglecting their food, and taking the poison of this contention, he that had mentioned the word *condition*, starts up and says, " Review the whole affair : Take heed to your assertions ; I am afraid we dispute about words." Upon this all rise against him, all accuse him of robbing the Preserver of men of his glory, or holding a tenet injurious to the very fundamental principles of our constitution.

Let us leave them to the uneasy workings of their unaccountable panic, to consider the next article of the Minutes.

" VI. As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid : We are rewarded ' according to our works,' yea, ' because of our works.' How does this differ from, ' for the sake of our works ?' And how differs this from *secundum merita operum* ? as our works deserve ? Can you split this hair ? I doubt, I cannot."

If Mr. W. meant, that we are saved by the *merit*

of works, and not entirely by that of Christ, you might exclaim against his proposition as erroneous ; and I would echo back your exclamation. But as he flatly denies it, No. 4, in those words, " Not by the merit of works," and has constantly asserted the contrary for above thirty years, we cannot, without monstrous injustice, fix that sense upon the word *merit* in this paragraph.

Divesting himself of bigotry and party-spirit, he generously acknowledges truth even when it is held forth by his adversaries : An instance of candour worthy of our imitation ! He sees that God offers and gives his children here on earth, particular rewards for particular instances of obedience. He knows that when a man is saved meritoriously by Christ, and *conditionally by* (or, if you please, *upon the terms of*) *the work of faith, the patience of hope, and the labour of love*, he shall particularly be rewarded in heaven for his works ; and he observes, that the Scriptures steadily maintain, we are recompensed *according to our works*, yea, *because of our works*.

The former of these assertions is plain from the parable of the talents, and from these words of our Lord, Matt. xvi. 27, " The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, and reward every man according to his works :" — Unbelievers *according to* the various degrees of demerit belonging to their evil works ; (for some of them shall, comparatively, *be beaten with few stripes* ;) and believers according to the various degrees of excellence found in their good works ; for as " one star differeth from another star in glory, so is also the resurrection of the" righteous "dead."

The latter assertion is not less evident from the repeated declarations of God : " *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world,*" Rev. iii. 10.— " *Because Phi-*

neas was zealous for his God," in killing Zimri and Cozbi, "behold I give unto him my covenant of peace, and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood."—And again: "*Because* thou hast done this," and "hast not withheld thy Son, by myself have I sworn that in blessing I will bless thee, *because* thou hast obeyed my voice." Now, says Mr. W., how differs this from, "I will bless thee, for the sake of thy obedience to my voice?" "And how differs this from *secundum merita obedientia*,—as thy obedience deserves?" And by comparing the difference of these expressions to the splitting of a hair, or to a metaphysical subtlety, he very justly insinuates, that we have been too dreadfully afraid of the word *merit*. Surely, Sir, you will not divest yourself of the candour that belongs to a Christian, to put on the bitter zeal of a bigot. You will not run for fear of Popery into the very spirit of it, by crying, *Heresy! Heresy!* before you have maturely considered the question; or if you have done so once, you will do it no more. And if Mr. W. should ever propose again the splitting of a hair, I hope you will remember that equity (to say nothing of brotherly love) requires you to split the hair *first* yourself, before you can with decency stir up people far and near against him, for modestly doubting, whether he can do it or not.

But suppose some are determined to cry, *Heresy*, whenever they see the word *merit*; I hope others will candidly weigh what follows, in the balance of unprejudiced reason.

If we detach from the word *merit* the idea of "obligation on God's part to bestow any thing upon creatures who have a thousand times forfeited their comforts and existence;" if we take it in the sense we fix to it in a hundred cases; for instance this: "A master may reward his scholars according to the *merit* of their exercises, or he may

not; for the *merit* of the best exercise can never bind him to bestow a premium for it, unless he has promised it of his own accord :" If we take, I say, the word *merit* in this simple sense, it may be joined to the word *good works*, and bear an evangelical meaning.

To be convinced of it, candid reader, consider with Mr. W., that "God accepts and rewards no work but so far as it proceeds from his own grace through the Beloved." Forget not that Christ's Spirit is the savour of each believer's salt, and that he puts excellence into the *good works* of his people, or else they could not be *good*. Remember, he is as much concerned in the good tempers, words, and actions of his living members, as a tree is concerned in the sap, leaves, and fruit of the branches it bears. (John xv. 5.) Consider, I say, all this, and tell us whether it can reflect dishonour upon Christ and his grace, to affirm, that as his personal merit, the merit of his holy life and painful death, "opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers," so the merit of those works which he enables his members to do, will determine the peculiar degrees of glory graciously allotted to each of them.

I own, I believe there is such a dignity in every thing in which the Son of God has an hand, that the Father, who is always well pleased with him and his works, cannot but look upon it with peculiar complacency. Even "a cup of water given in his dear *name*," that is, by the efficacy of his loving Spirit, hath that in it which "shall in no wise lose its reward ;" for it has something of the love of the God-man Jesus, which merits all the approbation and smiles of the Father.

In our well-meant zeal against Popery we have been driven to an extreme, and have not done good works justice. "I am the Vine," says Jesus, "and ye are the branches. He that abideth in me bringeth forth much fruit. Herein is my Father glorified

that ye bear much fruit." What! is the Father glorified in the fruit of believers; and shall this fruit be represented to us always grub-eaten, and rotten at the core? Do we honour either the Vine, or the Husbandman, while one hour we speak wonders of the fruit of the Vine, and the next represent the branches and their fruit as full of deadly poison? O God of mercy and patience, forgive us, for we know not what we do! We even think we do thee service: O give us genuine, and save us from *voluntary, humility!*

Believer, let not the virtue of thy Saviour's righteousness, the only good thing that is in thee, be evil spoken of. "Thou art grafted upon the good olive-tree; be not high-minded but fear;" fear to be *cut off* like the branch that *beareth not fruit*; but be not afraid to suck the balmy sap, till the peaceful olive ripens in thy soul, and drops the oil of joy that makes a cheerful countenance. Thou art "married to Christ, that henceforth thou shouldest bring forth fruit unto God." O let not thy mistaken brethren discourage thee from doing all the good that thy heart and hand find to do, and that "with all thy might!"

I write these allusions as they occur to my mind, to raise thy thoughts above spiritual sloth and barrenness of heart, by showing thee, through a scriptural glass, something of thy Husband's glory, and of the excellency of the "labour of love," wherein thou hast the honour of being a "worker together with him." Let not what I say puff thee up, but encourage thee to "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as thou knowest thy labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." Remember thou hast nothing to boast of, but much reason to be humbled. If thy works are compared to a rose, the colour, odour, and sweeteness are Christ's; the aptness to fade, and the thorns, are thine: If to a burning taper, the snuff

and smoke come from thee, the bright and cheering light from thy Bridegroom. The excellence and merit of the performance flow from him; the flaws and imperfections from thee; nevertheless the whole work is as truly thine, as grapes are truly the fruit of the branch that bore them. And yet, "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more canst thou, except thou abide in Christ; for without him thou canst do nothing."

Having thus cautioned thee against the Popish abuse of Mr. W.'s doctrine of the excellence of works, and shown thee the evangelical use that a real Protestant should make of it; I return to the word "*merit*, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid." Let a comparison help thee to understand, how a believer may use it in a very harmless sense.

The king promises rewards for good pictures, to miserable foundlings, whom he has charitably brought up, and graciously admitted into his royal academy of painting: Far from being masters of their art, they can of themselves do nothing but spoil canvass, and waste colours by making monstrous figures; but the king's son, a perfect painter, by his father's leave, guides their hands, and by that means good pictures are produced, though not so excellent as they would have been, had not he made them by their stiff and clumsy hands. The king, however, approves of them, and fixes the reward of each picture according to its peculiar *merit*. If thou say that the poor foundlings, owing all to His Majesty, and the prince's having freely guided their hands, themselves *merit* nothing; because, after all they have done, they are miserable daubers still, and nothing is properly theirs but the imperfections of the pictures, and therefore the King's reward, though it may be of promise, can never be of debt; I grant, I assert it. But if thou say, The good pictures have no *merit*; I beg leave

to dissent from thee, and tell thee thou speakest as unadvisedly for the king, as Job's friends did for God. For if the pictures have absolutely no *merit*, dost thou not greatly reflect upon the king's taste and wisdom in saying that he *rewards* them? In the name of common sense, what is it he rewards? —the *merit* or *demerit* of the work?

But this is not all, if the pictures have no *merit*, what hath the king's son been doing? Hath he lost all his trouble in helping the novices to sketch and finish them? Shall we deny the excellency of *his* performance, because *they* were concerned in it? Shall we be guilty of this glaring partiality any longer? No; some Protestants will dare to judge righteous judgment: And acknowledging there is *merit* where Christ *puts* it, and where God *rewards* it, they will give "honour to whom honour is due," even to him that worketh *all* the good *in all* his creatures.

For my part, I entirely agree with the author of the Minutes, and thank him for daring to break the ice of prejudice and bigotry among us, by restoring "works of righteousness" to their deserved glory, without detracting from the glory of "the Lord our Righteousness." I am as much persuaded that the grace of Christ *merits* in the works of his members, though themselves merit nothing but hell, as I am persuaded that gold in the ore hath its intrinsic worth, though it is mixed with dust and dross, which are good for nothing. As there is but "one Mediator," one prevailing Intercessor, "between God and us, even the Man Christ Jesus;" and nevertheless his Spirit in us "maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered :" So there is but one Man whose works are truly meritorious; but when he works in us by his Spirit, our works cannot (so far as he is concerned in them) but be in a sense meritorious; because they are his works. Real Protest-

ant, if thou deniest this, thou maintainest an Anti-christian proposition, namely, that Christ has lost his power of *meriting*. Herein must I dissent from thee, nor will the cry, *Heresy! Popery!* make me give up this fundamental truth of Christianity, that "Jesus is the same," the very same *deserving* Lord, "yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

In this evangelical view of things, the Redeemer is much exalted by the doctrine of the *merit* of good works ; and believers are still left in their native dust, to cry out, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give we the praise." In the light of this precious truth we see and admire the endearing contest that is always carried on between God's loving-kindness, and the humble gratitude of believers. God says, "Well done, good and faithful servants, reap what ye have sown;" and they answer, "Lord, *thy* pound hath gained all ; thou hast wrought all our works in us." God says, "They shall walk with me in white ; for they are *worthy*." And they reply, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood." Christ crowns faith by this gracious declaration, "Thy faith hath saved thee." And believers, in their turn, crown Christ by this true confession, "Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to thy mercy thou hast saved us ; for thou hast quickened us by thy Spirit when we were dead in sin ; yea, thou didst redeem us unto God by thy blood," hundreds of years before we had done any good work. In a word, they justly give God all the glory of their salvation, agreeable to the First axiom in the Gospel plan ; and God graciously gives them all the reward, according to the Second.

And now, is it not pity that any good men should be so far biassed by the prejudices of their education, or influenced by the spirit of their party, as to account this delightful, harmonizing view of

evangelical truths, a *dreadful heresy*? Is it not pity that by so doing they should expose their prepossession, strengthen the hands of Antinomians, harden the hearts of Papists, deprive their Saviour of part of the honour due to him, leave *seeming* contradictions in the Scriptures unexplained, and trample under foot, as unworthy of their Protestant orthodoxy, a powerful motive to obedience, by which neither Moses nor Jesus was above being influenced; for the one “looked to the recompence of reward;” and the other, “for the joy that was set before him, both despised the shame, and endured the cross.”

It may not be amiss to illustrate what has been advanced upon the merit or rewardableness of works, by scriptural instances of old and modern saints who have pleaded it before God. David speaks thus in the 18th Psalm, “The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me:—I was upright before him, and therefore hath he recompensed me according to my righteousness,” &c. And in the 119th Psalm, having mentioned his spiritual comforts, he says, “This I had because I kept thy precepts.” Another instance no less remarkable is that of Hezekiah, who prayed thus in his sickness, “Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.”

We see instances of this boldness in the New Testament also. “We have left all to follow thee,” said once the disciples of our Lord, and *what shall we have* for this sacrifice? Jesus, instead of blaming their question, simply told them they should have *an hundred fold* for all they had left, and made it a standing rule of distribution for all the Church. St. John exhorts the elect lady to “look to herself that she might not lose the things that she had

wrought, but receive a full reward." And evangelical Paul desires the Hebrews "not to cast away their confidence, which," says he, "hath great recompence of reward;" and charges the Colossians to see "that none beguiled them of their reward, in a voluntary humility."

From these and the like Scriptures, I conclude, that those who have a clear witness they have done what God commanded, may, without heresy, humbly demand the promised reward; which they can never do without this idea, that, according to the tenor of the Gospel covenant, they are fit subjects for it.

I know some will take the alarm, and, to save the ark which they think totters by this doctrine, will affirm, that in the above-mentioned passages David personates Christ; and Hezekiah the Pharisee. But this is contradicting the whole context, to say nothing of all sober commentators. Mr. Henry tells us, that David, in these verses, "reflects with comfort upon his own integrity; and rejoiceth, like St. Paul, in the testimony of his own conscience, that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity." And he informs us, that the Psalmist lays down, in this Psalm, "the rules of God's government, that we may know not only what God expects from us, but what we may expect from him." With regard to Hezekiah, it is plain his prayer was heard; a strong proof that it was inspired by the Spirit of Jesus, and not that of the Pharisee.

But if you reject, Sir, the testimony of David and Hezekiah, because they were Jews, receive, at least, that of real Protestants; for which we only need go as far as Bath or Talgarth parish: There we shall find chapels where the Protestants have agreed together, to ask rewards as solemnly as ever David and Hezekiah did. In the Hymns you have revised for another edition, and by that means made your own with respect to the doctrine, one is cal-

culated to "welcome a messenger of Jesus's grace," and all the congregation sings,

Give reward of grace and glory  
To thy faithful labourer there.

What, Sir! do you allow the labours of a Minister to be of such dignity, and his faithfulness to have such uncommon merit, that a thousand people can boldly ask God a reward for him, and that not only of gifts and temporal blessings, but of grace; and not of grace only, but glory too? You have in those two lines the very quintessence of the three grand heresies of the Minutes,—faithfulness, works, and merit. Permit me to add one passage more, from page 312, of Baxter's *Methodus Theologica Christiana*:

"The word *merit*, rightly explained, is not amiss. All the Fathers of the primitive Church have made use of it without opposition, to the best of my remembrance.—It may be used by believers who do not make a cloak for error, by wise men who will not be offended at it, and by those who want to defend the truth, and convey clearer ideas in the explanation of things intricate. There is no word that fully conveys the same idea; that which comes nearest to it is *dignity*, and suspicious persons will not like it much better. We have three words in the New Testament that come very near it,  $\alpha\tilde{\epsilon}\iota\omega\varsigma$ ,  $\mu\iota\sigma\theta\varsigma$ , and  $\delta\iota\chi\alpha\omega\varsigma$ ; and they occur pretty frequently there. We render them *worthy*, *reward*, and *just*; and the abuse which Papists make of them ought not to make us reject their use. The English word *worthy* conveys no other idea than that of the Latin word *meritum* taken actively; nor has the word *reward*, any other signification than the word *meritum* taken passively; therefore, they who can put a candid sense upon the words *worthy* and *reward* should do the same with regard to the word *merit*."

Having explained and vindicated the Sixth Article of the Minutes, I proceed to the Seventh.

"VII. The grand objection to one of the preceding propositions is drawn from matter of fact. God does, in fact, justify those, who, by their own confession, neither *fear'd God* nor *wrought righteousness*? Is this an exception to the rule?

"It is a doubt, if God make any exception at all. But how are we sure, that the person in question never did *fear God and work righteousness*? His own saying so is not proof: For we know how all that are convinced of sin undervalue themselves in every respect."

Do you think, Sir, the heresy of this proposition consists in intimating, that God does, in fact, justify those who fear him, and not those who make absolutely no stop in the downward road of open sin and flagrant iniquity? If it does, I am sure the Sacred Writers are heretics to a man. See the account we have of conversions in the Scripture; please to remember what Mr. W. means by justification, and then answer the following questions:—

Did not the prodigal son *come to himself*, repent, and return to his father, before he received the kiss of peace? Did not the woman that was a sinner forsake her wicked course of life, before our Lord said to her, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee?"

Again: Was not the woman of Samaria convinced of sin, yea of *all that ever she did*, before our Lord revealed himself to her, to enable her to believe unto justification? Did not Zaccheus evidence his fear of God, yea and *work righteousness*, by hearty offers of restitution, before Christ testified that he was *a son of Abraham*? Did not St. Paul express his fear of God, and his readiness to work righteousness, when he cried out, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?" Yea, did he not produce "*fruits meet for repentance*," by praying three days and three nights, before Ananias was sent to direct him how to *wash away his sins*? Did not the

Eunuch and Cornelius fear God? Did not David himself, whom the Apostle mentions as a grand instance of justification without the merit of works, fear God from his youth? And when he had wrought folly in Israel, was he not humbled for his sin, before he was washed from it? Did he not confess his crime, and say, "I have sinned;" before Nathan said, "The Lord hath put away thy sin?"

Does not St. Paul himself carry Mr. W.'s heresy so far as to say, "Whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent?" (Acts xiii. 26.) Must we so understand Romans iv. 5, as to make him contradict, point-blank, his own declarations, his own experience, and the account of all the above-mentioned conversions? Certainly not. Those words, "God justifies the ungodly, and him that worketh not, but believeth in Jesus," when candidly explained, agree perfectly with Mr. W.'s doctrine. 1. By the ungodly, the Apostle does not mean the wicked that does not forsake his way; but the man who, before he believed to justification, was ungodly, and still remains ungodly in the eye of the law of works, needing daily forgiveness by grace, even after he is made godly in a Gospel sense. 2. By "him that worketh not," St. Paul does not mean a lazy, indolent wretch, who, without any reluctance, follows the stream of his corrupt nature; but a penitent, who, whatever works he does, has no dependence upon them, esteems them as nothing, yea, "as dung and dross" in comparison of "the excellency of Christ;" and, in short, one who does not work to merit or purchase his justification, but comes to receive that invaluable blessing as a free gift. 3. That this is the meaning of the Apostle is evident from his adding, that he who "worketh not," yet "believeth." For if he took the word "worketh not," in an absolute sense, he could never make it

agree with “believing,” which is certainly a *work*; yea, a work of our noblest part; for “with the heart man believeth to righteousness.” Add to this, Sir, that justifying faith, as I observed before, never comes without her forerunner, conviction; nor conviction of sin, without suitable tempers, or inward works. “There is nothing,” says Dr. Owen, “that I will more firmly adhere to in this whole doctrine, than the necessity of convictions previous to true believing; as, also, displacency, sorrow, fear, a desire of deliverance, with other necessary effects of true convictions.” St. Paul, therefore, is consistent with himself, and Mr. W. with St. Paul.

Again: If God justify sinners merely as “ungodly,” and people that “work not,” why should he not justify *all* sinners; for they are all ungodly, and there is “none” of them “that does good, no not one?” Why did not the Pharisee, for example, go to his house justified as well as the Publican? You will probably answer, that “he was not convinced of sin.” Why, Sir, this is just what Mr. W. maintains: Express yourself in St. Peter’s words, He did not “fear God;” or in those of John the Baptist, He did not “bring forth fruit meet for repentance.”

Should some ask, What “works meet for repentance” did the woman caught in adultery do, before our Lord justified her? I would ask, in my turn, How do they know that the Lord justified her? Do they conclude it from the words, “Neither do I condemn thee?” Does not the context show, that as the Pharisees had not condemned her to be stoned, according to the Mosaic law, neither would our Lord take upon himself to pass sentence upon her, according to his declaration on another occasion, “I am not sent to condemn the world, but that the world through me might be saved?” This by no means implies, that the world is justified in

St. Paul's sense, Romans v. 1. But supposing she were justified, how do you know that our Lord's words, writing, looks, and grace, had not brought her to godly shame and sorrow, that is, to the fear of God, and the working of internal righteousness, before he gave her the peace that passes all understanding?

After all, Mr. W. says, with modesty and wisdom, "It is a doubt whether God makes any exception at all :" And it lies upon you to show there is in these words any thing contrary to the humility of the true Christian, and orthodoxy of the sound Divine. But, please to remember, that if you judge of orthodoxy according to the works of Dr. Crisp, we will take the liberty to appeal to the word of God.

But you make, perhaps, Mr. W.'s heresy in this proposition, consist in his refusing to take the word of persons convinced of sin, when they say, they never "feared God" nor wrought "righteousness." "For we know," says he, "how all that are convinced of sin, undervalue themselves in every respect."

Had Mr. W. imagined, that some Christian friends (O my God ! save me from such friendship !) would leave no stone unturned to procure a copy of his Minutes, in order to find some occasion against him, he would probably have worded this with more circumspection. But he wrote for real friends ; and he knew, such would at once enter into his meaning, which is, that "persons deeply convinced of sin are apt, very apt, to form a wrong judgment both of their state and performances, and to think the worst of themselves in every respect, that is, both with regard to what divine grace does in them, and by them."

And this is so obvious a truth, that he must be a novice indeed in Christian experience who doubts of it for a moment ; and a great lover of disputing,

who will make a man an offender for so true an assertion. Do we not daily see some, in whom the arrows of conviction stick fast, who think they are as much past recovery as Satan himself? Do not we hear others complain, they “grow worse and worse,” when they only discover, more and more, how bad they are by nature? And are there not some, who bind upon themselves heavy burdens of their own making, and, when they cannot bear them, are tormented in their consciences with imaginary guilt; while others are ready to go distracted through groundless fears of having committed the sin against the Holy Ghost? In a word, do we not see hundreds, who, when they have reason to think well of themselves, think there is no hope for them? In all these respects, do they not act like Jonah in the fish’s belly, and say, “I am cast out of thy sight?” And have they not need to encourage themselves in their God, and say, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?”

But let your conscience speak, Sir, on this matter. When some deep mourners have complained to you of their misery, danger, and desperate state, did you never drop a word of comfort to this effect?—“ You undervalue yourselves; you write too bitter things against yourselves; your case is not so bad as your unbelieving fears represent it: God’s thoughts are not as your thoughts. Many, like the foolish virgins, think themselves sure of heaven, when they stand on the brink of hell; and many think they are just dropping into it, who are ‘not far from the kingdom of God.’”

Yea, and as it is with real seekers, so it is with real believers. Did they not undervalue, yea, degrade themselves, by the remains of their unbelief; or, which is the same, did they live up to their dignity, and everywhere consider themselves as “members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven;” “what man-

ner of persons," yea, what angels "would they be in all holy conversation!"

Sometimes their light shines with peculiar lustre, like Moses's face, and they know it not. Thousands see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven; but the matter is hid from them: They complain, perhaps, that they are the most unprofitable of all his children. Let me instance in one particular: St. Paul, Mr. Whitefield, and thousands of the brightest stars of the Church, have called themselves both "the chief of sinners," and "the least of all saints." Now, as, in a chain, there is but one link that can be called the first, or the last; so, in the very nature of things, there can be but one man in the immense file of Christ's soldiers, that is actually "the chief of sinners," and "the least of all saints." If a thousand believers, therefore, say those two appellations belong to themselves, it is evident nine hundred and ninety-nine undervalue themselves. For my part, I cannot but think they suit me ten thousand times better than they did St. Paul: I must, therefore, insolently think myself a less sinner and a greater saint than he, or, of necessity, believe that he, and all that are partakers of the same convincing grace, undervalue themselves in every respect.

One more article remains, and if it do not contain the "dreadful heresy," which hitherto we have looked for in vain, the Minutes are, from first to last, scripturally orthodox, and you have given Churchmen and Dissenters a false alarm.

"VIII. Does not talking of a justified and sanctified state tend to mislead men? almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every hour, and every moment, pleasing or displeasing to God, according to our works: According to the whole of our inward tempers and outward behaviour."

To do this proposition justice, and prevent mis-

understandings, I must premise some observations :—

1. Mr. W. is not against persons talking of justification and sanctification in a scriptural sense : For when he knows the tree by the fruits, he says himself to his flocks, as St. Paul did to the Corinthians, “ Some of you are sanctified and justified.” Nor does he deny that God justifies a penitent sinner in a moment, and that in a moment he can “ manifest himself ” unto his believing people “ as he does not to the world,” and “ give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified, through faith in Jesus.” His objection respects only the idea entertained by some, and countenanced by others, that, when God forgives us our sins, he introduces us into a state where we are unalterably fixed in his blessed favour, and for ever stamped with his holy image ; so that it matters no longer whether the tree is barren or not, whether it produces good or bad fruit ; it was set at such a time, and therefore it must be a “ tree of righteousness ” still : A conclusion directly contrary to the words of our Lord and his beloved disciple : “ By their fruits ye shall know them.” “ Every branch in me that beareth not fruit,” much more that beareth evil fruit, “ my Father taketh away.”

2. Permit me, Sir, to observe also, that Mr. W. has many persons in his Societies, (and would to God there were none in ours !) who profess they were justified or sanctified in a moment ; but, instead of trusting in the living God, so trust to what was done in that moment, as to give over ‘ taking up their cross daily,’ and “ watching unto prayer with all perseverance.” The consequences are deplorable ; they slide back into the spirit of the world ; and their tempers are no more regulated by the meek, gentle, humble love of Jesus. Some inquire, with the Heathens, “ What shall we eat, and what shall we drink” to please ourselves ?

Others evidently "love the world, lay up treasures on earth," or ask, "Wherewith shall we be" fashionably "clothed?" Therefore "the love of the Father is not in them." And not a few are "led captive by the devil at his will :" Influenced by his unhappy suggestions, they harbour bitterness, malice, and revenge ; none is in the right but themselves, and "wisdom shall die with them."

Now, Sir, Mr. W. cannot but fear, it is not well with persons who are in any of these cases ; though every body should join to extol them as "dear children of God," he is persuaded that "Satan has beguiled them as he did Eve ;" and he addresses them as our Lord did the angel of the church of Sardis, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead," or dying : "Repent, therefore, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die ; for I have not found thy works perfect before God." Mr. W. hath the word of prophecy, which he thinks more sure than the opinion of a world of professors ; and according to that word he sees, that "they who are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God," and that God's Spirit does not lead into the vanities of the world, or indulgence of fleshly lusts, any more than into the pride or malice of Satan. Nor does he think that those are not *under the law*, who can merrily laugh at the law, and pass jests upon Moses the venerable servant of God ; but with St. Paul he asserts, that when people are "under grace, and not under the law, sin hath no dominion over them." With our Lord he declares, "He who committeth sin is the servant of sin ;" and with his prophet, that "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity" with the least degree of approbation. In short, he believes that God, being unchangeable in his holiness, cannot but always *love righteousness and hate iniquity* ; and that, as the heart is continually working either iniquity or righteousness,

and as God cannot but be pleased at the one, and displeased at the other, he is continually pleased or displeased with us, according to the workings of our hearts, and the fruits which they outwardly produce.

Perhaps, you object to the word *every moment*. But why should you, Sir? If it be not *every moment*, it is *never*. If God do not approve holiness and disapprove sin *every moment*, he never does it, for he changes not. If he do it only now and then, he is such an one as ourselves; for even wicked men will approve righteousness and condemn unrighteousness, by fits and starts. I may, *every moment* harbour malice in my heart, and so commit internal murder. If God wink at this one instant, why not two? and so on to days, months, and years? Does the *duration* of moral evil constitute sin? May not I be guilty of the greatest enormity in the twinkling of an eye? And is it not the ordinary property of the most horrid crimes, such as robbery and adultery, that they are soon finished?

Do not say, Sir, that this doctrine sets aside *salvation by faith*: It is highly consistent with it. He that, in God's account, does the best works, has the most faith, most of the sap of eternal life that flows from the heavenly Vine; and he that has most faith, has most of Christ's likeness, and is, of course, most pleasing to God, who cannot be pleased but with Christ and his living image. On the other hand, he that, in God's account, does the worst works, and has the worst tempers, has most unbelief. He that has most unbelief, is most like *his father the devil*; and must consequently be most displeasing to him that accepts us *in the Beloved*, and not *in the wicked one*.

Having premised these observations, I come closer to the point, and assert, that if we are not every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, according

to the works of our hearts and hands, you must set your seal to the following absurdities :

1. "God is angry with the wicked all the day," and yet there are *moments* in which he is not angry at them.—2. Lot *pleased* God as much in those moments in which he got drunk and committed incest with his daughters, as in the day he exercised hospitality towards the disguised angels.—3. David did not displease God more when he committed adultery with Bathsheba, and imbrued his heart in her husband's blood, than when he danced before the ark, or composed the 103d Psalm.—4. Solomon was as acceptable to God in the moment when "his wives turned away his heart after other gods," as when he chose wisdom, and his speech pleased the Lord ; when he went after the goddess Ashtaroth, and built an high place to bloody Moloch ; as when he represented our Melchisedec, and dedicated the Temple.—5. Again you must set your seal to these propositions of Dr. Crisp : "From the time thy transgressions were laid upon Christ, thou ceasest to be a transgressor, to the last hour of thy life ; so that now thou art not an idolater, thou art not a thief, &c., thou art not a sinful person, whatsoever sin thou committest." Again, "God does no longer stand offended nor displeased, though a believer, after he is a believer, do sin often ; except he will be offended where there is no cause to be offended, which is blasphemy to speak." Yet again, "It is thought that elect persons are in a damnable estate, in the time they walk in excess of riot ; let me speak freely to you, that the Lord has no more to lay to the charge of an elect person, yet in the height of iniquity, and in the excess of riot, and committing all the abominations that can be committed."—"There is no time but such a person is a child of God."—6. In short, Sir, you must be of the sentiment of the wildest Antinomian I ever knew, who, because he had once a bright manifestation of par-

don, not only concludes that he is safe, though he lives in sin, but asserts, God would no more be *displeased* with him for whoring and stealing, than for praying and receiving the sacrament.

Again: It is an important truth, that we may please God for a time, and yet afterwards displease him. St. Paul mentions those who, by putting away a good conscience, concerning faith made shipwreck, and therefore pleased God no longer, seeing that “without faith it is impossible to please him.”

Of this the Israelites are a remarkable instance. “They did all drink of that [spiritual] rock that followed them,” and “that rock was Christ.” “Yet with many of them God was not well pleased:” Then comes the proof of the divine displeasure; for “they were overthrown in the wilderness.”—“Now,” adds the Apostle, “these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, that we should not lust after evil things, and tempt Christ as they did.” “Therefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest,” after their example, “he fall” into wilful sin, the divine displeasure, and utter destruction.

Our Lord teaches the same doctrine both by parables and positive assertions. He gives us the history of a man to whom his Lord and King compassionately *forgave a debt of ten thousand talents*: This ungrateful wretch, by not forgiving his fellow-servant, who owed him an hundred pence, forfeited his own pardon, and drew upon himself the King’s heaviest displeasure, “for he was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him;” and, to the eternal overthrow of Dr. Crisp’s fashionable tenets, our Lord adds, “So, likewise, shall my Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” Agreeably to this he assured his disciples, that his Father “pruneth every branch in

him that beareth fruit, and taketh away every one that beareth not fruit ;” and, to show how far his displeasure may proceed, he observes, that such a barren branch is “ cast forth, is withered, gathered, cast into the fire, and burned.”

Here, Sir, I might add all those Scriptures that testify the possibility of falling away from the divine favour ; I might bring the alarming instances of those apostates, who once “ tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,” and afterwards “ fell from their steadfastness, lost their reward,” became “ enemies to God by wicked works, hated the light” which once they rejoiced in, because it reproved their evil deeds ; “ trod under foot the Son of God, forgat they were washed from their old sins, and counted the blood of Christ, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing.” But I refer you, Sir, to the two John Goodwins of the age, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, and the Rev. Mr. Sellon, who have so cut down and stripped the *Crispian orthodoxy*, that some people think it actually lies without either root, bark, or branches, exposed to the view of those who have courage enough to see and think for themselves.

Should all they have advanced, to show that we are every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, according to our internal and external works, have no weight with you ; let me conclude by producing the testimony of two respectable Divines, against whom you will not enter a protest.

The one is the Rector of Loughrea. You tell us, Sir, in your Sermons, page 88, that the acceptance of Cornelius “ was not absolutely final and decisive ;” and you add, “ So long as we continue in the flesh, we are doubtless in a probationary state. Even after Cornelius had been endued with the Holy Ghost, had he wilfully done despite to the Spirit of grace, he might have [not only displeased

*God, which is all Mr. W. asserts in this proposition, but] fallen as deep into perdition as ever Judas did.*"

I know one, Sir, who was burned as a *dreadful heretic*, that did not go farther in this heresy than you do. And this is good Bishop Latimer; who not only affirmed, that "Christ shed as much blood for Judas as he did for Peter," but roundly asserted, "We may one time be in the book and another out, as it appeareth by David, who was written in the book of life; but when he sinned, (which, by the by, we may do every moment,) he, at the same time, was out of the favour of God, until he had repented; out of Christ, who is the book in which all believers are written."—*Latimer's Sermon on the 3d Sunday after Epiphany.*

Thus, Sir, have I looked out for the *heresy*, the *dreadful heresy* of Mr. W.'s Minutes, by bringing all the propositions they contain, to the touchstone of Scripture and common sense; but instead of finding it, I have found the very marrow of the Gospel of Christ, so far as it is opposed to Dr. Crisp's Antinomian Gospel; which at this time would overflow our little Sion, if God did not sit above the water-floods, and say to the proudest bil lows of error, "Hitherto shall ye come and no farther." I have showed that the Minutes contain nothing but what is truly scriptural, and nothing but what the best Calvinist Divines have themselves directly or indirectly asserted;—except perhaps, the sixth proposition concerning the merit of works; and with respect to this, I hope I have demonstrated, upon rational and evangelical principles, that Mr. W., far from *bringing in a damnable heresy*, has done the Gospel justice, and Protestantism service, by candidly giving up an old prejudice equally contrary to Scripture and good sense,—a piece of bigotry which hath long hardened the Papists against the doctrine of salvation by the

merit of Christ, and hath added inconceivable strength to the Antinomian delusion among us. One difficulty remains, and that is, to account for your attacking Mr. W., though you could not wound him without stabbing yourself. Reserving my reflections upon this amazing step for another letter, I remain

Your astonished servant,  
In the bonds of a peaceful Gospel,  
J. FLETCHER.

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## LETTER V.

HON. AND REV. SIR,

HAVING vindicated both some important doctrines of the Gospel, and an eminent servant of Christ from the charge of *dreadful heresy*; I will now take the liberty of a friend to expostulate a little with *you*.

When Brutus, among the Senators, rushed upon Cæsar, the venerable General, as he wrapped himself in his mantle, just said, "And art thou also among them?—Even thou, my son?" May not Mr. W. address you, Sir, in the same words, and add, "If a body of men must be raised to attack me, let some zealous follower of Dr. Crisp, some hot-headed vindicator of reprobation and eternal justification, blow the trumpet, and put himself at their head: But let it not be *you*, who believe with me that we are moral agents; that God is love; that Jesus tasted death for every man; and that the Holy Spirit shall not always strive with sinners. If you do not regard my reputation, consider, at least, your own; and expose me not as an heretic for advancing propositions, the substance of which you have avowed before the sun."

But had those propositions at length appeared to

you unsound, yea, and had you never maintained them yourself, should you not, as a Christian and a brother, have written to him, acquainted him with your objections, and desired him to solve them and explain himself, or you should be obliged publicly to expose him ?

Was this condescension more than was due from you, Sir, and our other friends, to a grey-headed Minister of Christ, an old General in the armies of Emmanuel, a Father who has children capable of instructing even masters in Israel, and one whom God made the first and principal instrument of the late revival of internal religion in our Church ?

Instead of this friendly method, as if you were a Barak, “ commanded by the Lord God of Israel, you call together the children of Naphtali and Zebulon : ” You convene from England and Wales, Clergy and Laity, Churchmen and Dissenters, to meet you at Bristol, where they are, it seems, to be entertained in good and free quarters. And for what grand expedition ? Why, on a day appointed, you are to march up in a body ; not to attack Sisera and his iron chariots, but an old Caleb, who, without meddling with you, quietly goes on to the conquest of Canaan : Not to desire in a friendly manner, after a fair debate of every proposition that appears dangerous, and upon previous conviction that what is exceptionable may be given up ; but to do what I think was never done by *nominal*, much less by “ *real*, Protestants.”—O let it not be told in Rome, lest the sons of the Inquisition rejoice !—This mixed, this formidable body is to “ insist upon ” Mr. W. and the Preachers in his connexion, “ formally recanting ” their Minutes, as appearing “ injurious to the very fundamental principles of Christianity, and being dreadfully heretical.” And this, (astonishing !) without the least inquiry made into their meaning and design ; —without a shadow of authority from our supe-

riors in Church or State ;—without an appeal to “the law and to the testimony ;”—without form of process ;—without judge or jury ;—without so much as allowing the poor *heretics* (who are condemned six weeks before they can possibly be heard) to answer for themselves !

As I was fortunate enough to stop, some months ago, such rash proceedings in Wales, permit me, Sir, to bear my testimony against them in England, and to tell you they exceed the late transactions in Edmund-Hall. The six Students, against whom wrath was gone forth, were allowed to say what they could in their own defence, before they were sentenced, as unfit members of a literary society. Likewise the Vice-Chancellor had the statutes of the University of Oxford, seeming to countenance his proceedings : But what statute of the University of Jesus can you produce, even to save appearances ? Surely not that which the Papists make such use of, “Compel them to come in ;” for I am persuaded, that, although Clergy and Laity, Churchmen and Dissenters, are convened to go in a body to Mr. W.’s Conference, you mean no external compulsion. Much less are you authorized to *insist* upon his owning himself a *heretic*, by these words of the Apostle, “As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,” and “esteem Ministers highly in love for their works’ sake.”—Neither by his command, “An heretic after the first and second admonition,” &c., for you have neither proved Mr. W. an heretic, nor once admonished him as such.

Surely our Lord will not smile upon your undertaking ; for he has left his sentiments upon record, the reverse of your practice. He had said, “Whoever shall receive” (not provoke) “one of such children in my name, receiveth me.” “But John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because

he followeth not with us." "Forbid him not," said Jesus, "for there is no man who can do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." Festus himself, though a poor Heathen, will disapprove of such a step. "It is not the manner of the Romans," says he, "to deliver any man to die," (or to insist on his publicly giving up his reputation, which, in some cases, is worse than death,) "before that he who is accused, have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him." The lordliness of your procedure, Sir, even exceeds, in one respect, the severity of the Council of Constance; where poor Jerome of Prague had leave to plead his own cause, before he was obliged to acknowledge himself an heretic; and make a "formal recantation" of the propositions he had advanced.

Besides, how could you suppose, Sir, that Mr. W., and the Preachers who shall assemble with him, are such weak men, as tamely to acknowledge themselves heretics upon your *ipse dixit*? Suppose Mr. W. took it into his head to convene all the Divines that disapprove the extract of Zanchius, to go with him in a body to Mr. Toplady's chapel, and demand a formal recantation of that performance, as heretical; yea, to insist upon it, before they had "measured swords, or broken a pike together;" would not the translator of Zanchius from the ramparts of Common Sense deservedly laugh at him; and ask whether he thought to frighten him by his protests, and bully him into orthodoxy?

O Sir, have we not fightings now *without*, to employ all our time and strength? Must we also declare war and promote fightings *within*? Must we catch at every opportunity to stab one another, because the livery of truth which we wear is not turned up in the same manner? What can be

more cruel than this? What can be more cutting to an old Minister of Christ, than to be traduced as a dreadful heretic, in printed letters sent to the best men in the land, yea, through all England and Scotland, and signed by a person of your rank and piety? to have things that he knows not, that he never meant, laid to his charge, and dispersed far and near? while he is gone to a neighbouring kingdom, to preach Jesus Christ, to have his friends prejudiced, his foes elevated, and the fruit of his extensive ministry at the point of being blasted? Put yourself in his place, Sir, and you will see that the wound is deep and reaches the very heart.

I can apologize for the other *real Protestants*. Some are utter strangers to polemical divinity; others are biassed by Calvinism; and one, whose name is used, never saw your Circular Letter till it was in print. But what can I say for you, Sir? Against hope I must believe in hope, that an unaccountable paine influenced your mind, and deprived you, for a time, of the calmness and candour which adorn your natural temper. If this be the case, may you act with less precipitancy for the future! And may the charity "that hopeth all things, believeth all things, does not provoke, and is not provoked," rule in our hearts and lives! So shall the heathen world drop their just objections against our unhappy divisions, and once more be forced to cry out, "See how these Christians love!" And so shall we give over trying to disturb, or pull down, a part of the Church of Christ, because we dislike the colour of the stones with which it is built; or because our fellow-builders cannot pronounce *Shibboleth* just as we do.

One word more about Mr. W., and I have done. Of the two greatest and most useful Ministers I ever knew, one is no more. The other, after amazing labours, flies still with unwearied diligence through the three kingdoms, calling sinners

to repentance, and to the healing fountain of Jesus' blood. Though oppressed with the weight of near seventy years, and the care of near thirty thousand souls, he shames still, by his unabated zeal and immense labour, all the young Ministers in England, perhaps in Christendom. He has generally blown the Gospel-trump, and rode twenty miles, before most of the professors who despise his labours have left their downy pillow. As he begins the day, the week, the year, so he concludes them, still intent upon extensive services for the glory of the Redeemer, and the good of souls. And shall we lightly lift up our pens, our tongues, our hands against him? No, let them rather forget their cunning. If we *will* quarrel, can we find nobody to fall out with, but the Minister upon whom God puts the greatest honour?

Our Elijah has lately been translated to heaven. Grey-headed Elisha is yet a while continued upon earth. And shall we make a hurry and noise, to bring in railing accusations against him with more success? While we pretend to a peculiar zeal for Christ's glory, shall the very same spirit be found in us, which made his persecutors say, "He hath spoken blasphemy," (or heresy,) "what need we any farther witnesses?" Shall the sons of the Prophets, shall even children in grace and knowledge, openly traduce the venerable Seer and his abundant labours? When they see him run upon his Lord's errands, shall they cry, not, *Go up thou bald head*, but, *Go up thou heretic?* O Jesus of Nazareth, thou rejected of men, thou who wast once called a *deceiver of the people*, suffer it not; lest the raging bear of persecution come suddenly out of the wood upon those sons of discord, and tear them in pieces!

And suppose a Noah, an old preacher of righteousness, should have really nodded under the influence of an honest mistake, shall we act a

worse part than that of Canaan ? Shall we make sport of the nakedness which, we say, he has disclosed, when we have boldly uncovered it ourselves. O God, do not thou permit it, lest a curse of pride, self-sufficiency, bigotry, Antinomianism, and bitter zeal, come upon us ; and lest the children begotten by our unkind preaching, and unloving example, walk in our steps and inherit our propagated punishment !

Rather may the blessing of *peace-makers* be ours ; may the meek, loving Spirit of Jesus fill our hearts ! May streams, not of the bitter waters which cause the curse, but of the living water which gladdens the city of God, flow from our catholic breasts, and put out the fire of wild zeal and persecuting malice ! May we know when Sion is really in danger ; and when the accuser of the brethren gives a false alarm to disturb the peace of the Church, and turn the stream of undefiled, lovely, and loving religion, into the miry channel of obstinate prejudice, imperious bigotry, and noisy, vain jangling ! And may we at last unanimously worship together in the temple of peace, instead of striving for the mastery in the house of discord !

Should this public attempt to stop the war which has been publicly declared, be, in any degree, successful ;—should it cheek a little the forwardness that has lately appeared to stir up contention, under pretence of opposing heresy ;—should it make warm men willing to let the light of their moderation shine before the world, and to “keep a conscience void of offence” towards their neighbours, instead of openly opposing their liberty of conscience ;—should it cause the good that is in an eminent servant of Christ, to be less evil spoken of :—And, above all, should it convince any of the great impropriety of exposing *precious truths* as *dreadful heresies* ; and of preferring the Gospel of Dr. Crisp, to “the truth as it is in Jesus ;”—I

shall be less grieved at having been obliged to expostulate with you, Sir, in this public manner.

In hopes this will be the case, and with a heart full of ardent wishes that all our unhappy divisions may end in a greater union, I remain,

Hon. and Rev. Sir,

Your obedient servant,

In the peaceable Gospel of Jesus Christ,

J. FLETCHER.

*July 29, 1771.*

## SECOND CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM:

18

## THREE LETTERS

TO THE

HON. AND REV. MR. SHIRLEY.

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BY THE

VINDICATOR OF THE REV. MR. WESLEY'S  
MINUTES.

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Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and [scriptural] doctrine; for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.—*2 Tim. iv. 2, 3.*

Wherefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. But let brotherly love continue.—*Tit. i. 13. 1 Cor. xiii. 1.*



## P R E F A C E.

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THE publication of the "Vindication of Mr. Wesley's Minutes" having been represented by some persons as an act of injustice, the following letter is made public to throw some light upon that little event, and serve as a preface to the SECOND CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM.

TO THE REV. JOHN WESLEY.

"REV. AND DEAR SIR,

"As I love open dealing, I send you the substance, and almost the very words, of a private letter I have just written to Mr. Shirley, in answer to one, in which he informs me he is going to publish his Narrative. He is exceedingly welcome to make use of any part of my letters to Mr. Ireland, concerning the publication of my Vindication, and you are equally welcome to make what use you please of this. Among friends all things are, or should be, common.

"I am, Rev. and dear Sir,

"Yours, &c.,

"J. FLETCHER.

"MADELEY, Sept. 11, 1771."

TO THE HON. AND REV. MR. SHIRLEY.

"REV. AND DEAR SIR,

"It is extremely proper, nay, it is highly necessary, that the public should be informed, how much like a Minister of the Prince of Peace, and a meek, humble, loving brother in the Gospel of

Christ you behaved at the Conference. Had I been there, I would gladly have taken upon me to proclaim these tidings of joy to the lovers of Zion's peace. Your conduct at that time of love, is certainly the best excuse for the hasty step you had taken, as my desire of stopping my Vindication, upon hearing it, is the best apology I can make for my severity to you.

"I am not averse at all, Sir, to your publishing the passages you mention, out of my letters to Mr. Ireland. They show my peculiar love and respect for you, which I shall, at all times, think an honour, and, at this juncture, shall feel a peculiar pleasure, to see proclaimed to the world. They apologize for my calling myself a *lover of quietness*, when I unfortunately prove a *son of contention*; and they demonstrate that I am not altogether void of the fear, that becomes an awkward, unexperienced surgeon, when he ventures to open a vein in the arm of a person for whom he has the greatest regard. How natural is it for him to tremble, lest by missing the intended vein, and pricking an unseen artery, he should have done irreparable mischief, instead of an useful operation!

"But while you do me the kindness of publishing these passages, permit me, Sir, to do Mr. Wesley the justice of informing him, I had also written to Mr. Ireland, 'that whether my letters were suppressed or not, the Minutes *must* be vindicated,—that Mr. W. owed it to the Church, to the *real Protestants*, to all his societies, and to his own aspersed character;—and that, after all, the controversy did not seem to me, to be so much whether the Minutes should stand, as whether the antinomian Gospel of Dr. Crisp should prevail over the practical Gospel of Jesus Christ.'

"I must also, Sir, beg leave to let my vindicated friend know, that in the very letter where I so earnestly entreated Mr. Ireland to stop the publi-

cation of my letters to you, and offered to take the whole expense of the impression upon myself, though I should be obliged to sell my last shirt to defray it, I added that, ‘if they were published, I must look upon it as a *necessary evil or misfortune*;’ which of the two words I used I do not justly recollect: *A misfortune* for you and me, who must appear inconsistent to the world; you, Sir, with your Sermons, and I with my Title-page; and, nevertheless, *necessary* to vindicate misrepresented truth, defend an eminent Minister of Christ, and stem the torrent of Antinomianism.

“ It may not be improper also, to observe to you, Sir, that when I presented Mr. Wesley with my Vindication, I begged he would correct it, and take away whatever might be unkind or too sharp: Urging that though I meant no unkindness, I was not a proper judge of what I had written under peculiarly delicate and trying circumstances, as well as in a great hurry; and did not, therefore, dare to trust either my pen, my head, or my heart. He was no sooner gone, than I sent a letter after him, to repeat and urge the same request; and he wrote me word, he had ‘expunged every tart expression.’ *If he has*, (for I have not yet seen what alterations his friendly pen has made,) I am reconciled to their publication; and *that he has*, I have reason to hope from the letters of two judicious London friends, who calmed my fears, lest I should have treated you with unkindness.

“ One of them says, ‘ I reverence Mr. Shirley for his candid acknowledgment of his hastiness in judging. I commend the Calvinists at the Conference for their justice to Mr. Wesley, and their acquiescence in the Declaration of the Preachers in connexion with him. But is that Declaration, however dispersed, a remedy adequate to the evil done, not only to Mr. Wesley, but to the cause and work of God? Several Calvinists, in eagerness of malice

had dispersed their calumnies through the three kingdoms. A truly excellent person herself, in her mistaken zeal, had represented him as *a Papist unmasked, an Heretic, an Apostate*. A Clergyman of the first reputation informs me, *a Poem on his Apostasy* is just coming out. Letters have been sent to every serious Churchman and Dissenter through the land, together with the *Gospel Magazine*. Great are the shoutings, *And now that he lieth let him rise up no more!* This is all the cry. His dearest friends and children are staggered, and scarce know what to think. You, in your corner, cannot conceive the mischief that has been done, and is still doing. But your letters, in the hand of Providence, may answer the good ends you proposed by writing them. You have not been too severe to dear Mr. Shirley, moderate Calvinists themselves being judges; but very kind and friendly to set a mistaken man right, and probably to preserve him from the like rashness as long as he lives. Be not troubled, therefore, but cast your care upon the Lord.'

"My other friend says, 'Considering what harm the Circular Letter has done, and what an useless satisfaction Mr. Shirley has given by his vague acknowledgment, it is no more than just and equitable, that your letters should be published.'

"Now, Sir, as I never saw that *acknowledgment*, nor the *softening corrections* made by Mr. Wesley in my *Vindication*; as I was not informed of some of the above-mentioned particulars when I was so eager to prevent the publication of my letters; and as I have reason to think, that, through the desire of an immediate peace, the festering wound was rather skinned over than probed to the bottom; all I can say about this publication is, what I wrote to our common friend, namely, that 'I must look upon it as a necessary *evil*.'

“ I am glad, Sir, you do not direct your letter to Mr. Olivers, who was so busy in publishing my Vindication ; for, by a letter I have just received from Bristol, I am informed he did not hear how desirous I was to call it in, till he had actually given out, before a whole congregation, it would be sold. Besides, he would have pleaded with smartness, that he never approved of a patched-up peace, that he bore his testimony against it at the time it was made, and had a personal right to produce *my* arguments, since both parties refused to hear *his* at the Conference.

“ If your letter be friendly, Sir, and you print it in the same size with my Vindication, I shall gladly buy ten pounds’ worth of the copies, and order them to be stitched with my Vindication, and given gratis to the purchasers of it ; as well to do you justice, as to convince the world that we make a loving war ; and also to demonstrate how much I regard your respectable character, and honour your dear person. Mr. Wesley’s heart is, I am persuaded, too full of brotherly love to deny me the pleasure of thus showing you how sincerely I am, Reverend Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ JOHN FLETCHER.

“ MADELEY, Sept. 11, 1771.”

## SECOND CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM.

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TO THE REV. MR. SHIRLEY.

### LETTER I.

HONOURED AND REV. SIR,

I CORDIALLY thank you for the greatest part of your Narrative. It confirms me in my hopes, that your projected opposition to Mr. Wesley's Minutes proceeded, in general, from zeal for the Redeemer's glory: And as such a zeal, though amazingly mistaken, had certainly something very commendable in it, I sincerely desire your Narrative may evidence your *good meaning*, as some think my Vindication does your *mistake*.

In my last private letter I observed, Rev. Sir, that if your Narrative was *kind*, I would buy a number of copies, and give them gratis to the purchasers of my book, that they might see all you can possibly produce in your own defence, and do you all the justice your proper behaviour at the Conference deserves. But as it appears to me there are some important mistakes in that performance, I neither dare recommend it *absolutely* to my friends, nor wish it in the religious world the *full* success you desire.

I do not complain of its severity: On the contrary, considering the sharpness of my fifth letter, I gratefully acknowledge it is kinder than I had reason to expect. But permit me to tell you, Sir, I look for justice to the scriptural arguments I

advance in defence of truth, before I look for *kindness* to my insignificant person, and could much sooner be satisfied with the *former* than with the *latter* alone. As I do not admire the fashionable method of advancing general charges without supporting them by particular proofs, I shall take the liberty of pointing out some mistakes in your Narrative, and, by that means, endeavour to do justice to Mr. Wesley's Declarations, your own Sermons, my Vindication, and, above all, to the cause of practical religion.

Waving the repetition of what I said in my last, touching the publication of my Five Letters to you, I object, First, to your putting a wrong colour upon Mr. Wesley's Declaration. You insinuate, or assert, that he, and fifty-three of the Preachers in Conference with him, give up the doctrine of justification by works in the day of judgment. "It appears," say you, "from their subscribing the Declaration," notwithstanding Mr. Oliver's remonstrances, "that they do not maintain a second justification by works."

Surely, Sir, you wrong them. They might have objected to some of Mr. Oliver's expressions, or been displeased with his readiness to enter the lists of dispute; but, certainly, so many judicious and good men could never so betray the cause of practical religion, as tamely to renounce a truth of that importance. If they had, one step more would have carried them full into Dr. Crisp's eternal justification, which is the very centre of Antinomianism; and, without waiting for the return of the next Conference, I would bear my *legal* testimony against their *Antinomian* error. Mr. Wesley I reverence as the greatest Minister I know, but would not follow him one step farther than he follows Christ. Were he really guilty of rejecting the evangelical doctrine of a second justification by works, with the plainness and honesty of a Swiss,

I would address him, as I beg you would permit me to address you.

I. Neither you, Reverend Sir, nor any Divine in the world, have, I presume, a right to blot out of the Sacred Records, those words of Jesus Christ, St. James, and St. Paul :—“Blessed are they that *do* his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.” “Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *does* the will of my Father.” “Be ye, therefore, *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” “For as we are under the law to Christ,” “not the hearers of the law shall be just before God, but the doers of the law shall be *justified*.” “Every man’s work shall be made manifest: For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is:” His very words shall undergo the severest scrutiny: “I say unto you, [O, how many will insinuate the contrary!] that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment;” for “by thy words shalt thou [then] be justified,” and “by thy words shalt thou [then] be condemned.”

Can you say, Sir, that the justification mentioned by our Lord, in this passage, is the same as that which St. Paul speaks of, as the present privilege of all believers, and has no particular reference to the day of judgment mentioned in the preceding sentence? Or will you intimate, our Lord does not declare we shall be justified, in the last day, by *works*, but by *words*? Would this evasion be judicious? Do not all professors know that *words* are *works*, in a theological sense; as being both the signs of the *workings* of our hearts, and the positive *works* of our tongues? Will you expose your reputation as a Divine by trying to prove, that although we shall be justified by the *works* of our

tongues, those of our *hands* and *feet* shall never appear for or against our justification? Or will you insinuate that our Lord *recounted* the legal sermons written Matthew v. and xii.? If you do, his particular account of the day of judgment, chapt. xxv., which strongly confirms and clearly explains the doctrine of our second justification by works, will prove you greatly mistaken, as will also his declaration to St. John above forty years after, “Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man as his work [not faith] shall be.”

O, if faith alone turn the scale of justifying evidence at the bar of God, how many bold Antinomians will claim relation to Christ, and boast they are interested in his imputed righteousness! How many will say with the foolish virgins, “Lord, Lord! we are of faith, and Abraham’s children: *In thy name* we publicly exposed all legal professors, traduced their teachers as enemies to thy *free grace*; and, *to do thee service*, made it our business to expose the righteousness, and cry down the good works, of thy people; therefore, Lord! Lord! open to us!” But, alas! far from thanking them for their pains, without looking at their boasted faith, he will dismiss them with a—“Depart from me, ye that work iniquity!” As if he said:

“Depart, ye that make the doctrine of my atonement a cloak for your sins, or ‘sewed’ it as ‘a pillow under the arms of my people,’ to make them sleep in carnal security, when they should have ‘worked out their salvation with fear and trembling.’ You profess to know me, but I disown you. My sheep I know: Them that are mine I know: The *seal* of my holiness is upon them all: The motto of it (‘Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity’) is deeply engraven on their faithful breasts,—not on yours, ye carnal, ye ‘sold under sin.’

“ ‘ And why called ye me, Lord ! Lord ! and did not do the things which I said ? Why did you even use my righteousness as a breast-plate, to stand it out against the word of my righteousness ; and, as an engine, to break both tables of my law, and batter down my holiness ? Your heart condemns you, ye ‘ sinners in Zion ! Ye salt without savour ! ’ Ye believers without charity ! And am not I ‘ greater than your heart ? ’ And ‘ know ’ I not ‘ your works ? ’ Yes, ‘ I know that the love of God is not in you,’ for you despised one of these my brethren. How could you think to deceive me, ‘ the Searcher of hearts and Trier of reins ? ’ And how did you dare to call yourselves by my name ? as if you were *my* people ?—my *dear* people ?—mine *elect* ? Are not all my peculiar people ‘ partakers of my holiness,’ and ‘ zealous of good works ? ’ Have not I ‘ chosen to myself the man that is godly,’ and protested that the ‘ ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners,’ though in sheep’s clothing, ‘ in the congregation of the righteous ? ’ And say I not to the wicked, *Lo ammi*, though he should have been one of my people, Thou art none of my people now : ‘ What hast thou to do with taking my covenant in thy mouth ? ’ You denied me in works, and did not wash your hearts from iniquity in my blood ; therefore, according to my word, ‘ I deny you,’ in my turn, ‘ before my Father and his holy angels.’ Perish your hope, ye hypocrites ! and utter darkness be your hope, ‘ ye double-minded ! ’ Let fearfulness surprise you, ye tinkling cymbals : Let the fall of your Babels crush you, ye towering professors of my humble faith ! Fly, ‘ ye clouds without water ;’ ye ‘ chaff,’ fly before the blast of my righteous indignation ! ‘ Ye workers of iniquity ! Ye Satans transformed into angels of light ! ’ ”

II. Nor is our Lord singular in his doctrine of justification, or condemnation, by works in the day

of judgment. If it be an heresy, the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles are as great heretics as their Master. Enoch, quoted by St. Jude, prophesied that when the Lord shall "come to execute judgment upon all men," he will "convince the ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds and hard speeches." This conviction will, no doubt, be in order to condemnation; and this condemnation will not turn upon unbelief, but its effects, "ungodly deeds and hard speeches."—Solomon confirms the joint testimony of Enoch and St. Jude, where he says, "He that knoweth the heart shall render to every man according to his works;" And again, "Know, O young man, that for all these things," for all thy ways, "God shall bring thee into judgment."

St. Paul, the great champion for faith, is peculiarly express upon this Anti-Crispian doctrine. The Lord, says he, "in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, will render to every man according to his *deeds*; to them that *continue in well doing*;"—here is the true perseverance of the saints!—"eternal life! Indignation upon every soul of man that *does* evil, and glory to every man who *worketh* good; for there is no respect of persons with God.—We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things *done* in the body," not according to that he hath believed, whether it be true or false, but "according to that he hath *done*, whether it be good or bad." St. Peter asserts that the Father, "without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's *work*." And St. John, who next to our Lord gives us the most particular description of the day of judgment, concludes it by these awful words, "And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their *works*." It is not once said, according to their *faith*.

Permit me, Sir, to sum up all these testimonies in the words of two Kings and two Apostles.—“ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter,” says the King who chose wisdom : “ Fear God and keep his *commandments*, for this is the whole duty of man ; for God shall bring every *work* into judgment, whether it be good or evil.”—“ They that have *done* good,” says the King who is wisdom itself,” (and the Athanasian Creed after him,) “ shall go into everlasting life ; and they that have *not done* good, or that have done evil, to everlasting punishment.” “ You see then,” and they are the words of St. James, “ that a man is *justified by works*, and not by faith only.” By faith he is justified at his conversion, and when his backslidings are healed. But he is justified by works, 1. In the hour of trial, as Abraham was when he had offered up Isaac : 2. In a court of spiritual or civil judicature, as St. Paul at the bar of Festus: And, 3. Before the judgment-seat of Christ, as every one will be whose faith, when he goes hence, is found working by love ; for there, (says St. Paul,) as well as in consistorial courts, “ circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.” (1 Cor. vii. 19.)

III. This doctrine is so obvious in the Scripture, so generally received in all the Churches of Christ, and so deeply engraven on the consciences of sincere professors, that the most eminent Ministers of all denominations perpetually allude to it; yourself, Sir, not excepted, as I could prove from your Sermons, if you had not recanted them.—How often, for instance, has that great man of God, the truly reverend Mr. Whitefield, said to his immense congregations, “ You are warned ; I am clear of your blood ; I shall rise a swift witness against you, or you against me, in the terrible day of the Lord : O remember to clear me then !” Or words to that purpose. And is not this just as

if he had said, “ We shall be *justified* or *condemned in the day of judgment* by what we are now *doing*: I by my preaching, and you by your hearing?”

And say not, Sir, that “ such expressions were only *flights of oratory*, and prove nothing.” If you do, you *touch the apple of God’s eye*. Mr. Whitefield was not a *flighty orator*, but spoke the words of soberness and truth, with divine pathos, and floods of tears declarative of his sincerity.

Instead of swelling this letter into a volume (as I easily might) by producing quotations from all the sober Puritan Divines, who have directly or indirectly asserted a second justification by works, I shall present you only with two passages from Mr. Henry. On Matt. xii. 37, he says, “ Consider how strict the judgment will be on account of our words. ‘ By thy words thou shalt be justified or condemned;’ a common rule in men’s judgment, and here applied to God’s. Note, the constant tenor of our discourse, according as it is gracious or not gracious, will be an evidence for us, or against us, at that day. Those that ‘ seemed to be religious, but bridled not their tongues,’ will then be found to have put a cheat upon themselves with a vain religion. It concerns us to think much of the day of judgment, that it may be a check upon our tongues.” And again:

Upon those words, Rom. ii. 13, “ Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified;” the honest commentator says, “ The Jewish (Antinomian) Doctors bolstered up their followers with an opinion that all that were Jews, (the elect people of God,) how bad soever they lived, should have a glorious place in the world to come. This the Apostle here opposes. It was a very great privilege that they had the law, but not a saving privilege, ‘ unless they lived up to the law they had.’ ”

We may apply it to the Gospel: It is not hearing but *doing that will save us*, John xiii. 17; James i. 22."—Who does not perceive that Mr. Henry saw the truth, and spoke it so far as he thought his Calvinist readers could bear it? Surely if that good man dared to say *so much*, we, who have done "leaning too much towards Calvinism," should be inexcusable if we did not say *all*.

IV. These testimonies will, I hope, make you weigh with an additional degree of candour the following arguments:—

The voice that St. John heard in heaven did not say, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for their *faith* follows them:" No, but "their *works*." Faith is the hidden root, hope the rising stalk, and love, together with good works, the nourishing corn: And as the King's agents who fill the royal granary, do not take in the roots and stalks, but the pure wheat alone; so Christ takes neither faith nor hope into heaven, the former being gloriously absorbed in sight, and the latter in enjoyment.

If I may compare faith and hope to the chariot of Israel and the courser thereof, they both bring believers to the everlasting doors of glory, but do not enter in themselves. Not so *love* and *good works*; for love is both the nature and element of saints in glory; and *good works* necessarily *follow them* both in the *books* of remembrance which shall then *be opened*, and in the objects and witnesses of those works, who shall then be all present; as it appears from the words of our Lord, "You have done it," or "you have not done it, to one of the least of these my brethren," and those of St. Paul to his dear converts, "You shall be *my joy and my crown* in that day." Thus it is evident, that, although *faith* is the temporary measure according to which God deals out his mercy and grace in this world, as we may gather from that sweet saying of our

Lord, "Be it done to thee according to thy faith;" yet *love* and *good works* are the eternal measures, according to which he distributes justification and glory in the world to come. On these observations I argue,

We shall be justified in the last day by the grace and evidences which shall *then* remain.

Love and good works, the fruits of faith, shall *then* remain.

Therefore we shall *then* be justified by love and good works, that is, not by faith, but by its fruits.

V. This doctrine, so agreeable to Scripture, the sentiments of moderate Calvinists, and the dictates of reason, recommends itself likewise to *every man's conscience in the sight of God*. Who but Dr. Crisp could (after a calm review of the whole affair) affirm, that in the day of judgment, if I am accused of being actually an hypocrite, Christ's sincerity will justify me, whether it be found in me or not?

Again:—Suppose I am charged with being a drunkard, a thief, a whoremonger, a covetous person; or a fretful, impatient, ill-natured man; or, if you please, a proud bigot, an implacable zealot, a malicious persecutor, who, notwithstanding fair appearances of godliness, would raise disturbances, even in heaven if I were admitted there: Will Christ's sobriety, honesty, chastity, generosity, or will his gentleness, patience, and meekness, justify me from such dreadful charges? Must I not be found really sober, honest, chaste, and charitable? Must I not be inherently gentle, meek, and loving? Can we deny this without flying in the face of common sense, breaking the strongest bars of scriptural truth, and opening the flood-gates to the foulest waves of Antinomianism? If we grant it, do we not grant a second justification by works? And does not St. Paul grant, or rather *insist* upon,

as much, when he declares that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord?”

VI. You will probably ask, what advantage the Church will reap from this doctrine of a second justification by works. I answer that, under God, it will rouse Antinomians out of their carnal security, stir up believers to follow hard after holiness, and reconcile fatal differences among Christians, and seeming contradictions in the Scripture.

### 1. It will re-awaken Antinomians,\* who fancy

\* I beg I may not be understood to level the following paragraphs, or any part of these letters, at my pious *Calvinist* brethren. God knows how deeply I reverence many, who are immovably fixed in what some call “the doctrines of grace;” how gladly (as conscious of their genuine conversion and eminent usefulness) I would lie in the dust at their feet, to honour our Lord in his dear members: And how often have I thought it a peculiar infelicity in any degree to dissent from such excellent men, with whom I wanted both to live and die, and with whom I hope soon to reign for ever!

As these *real* children of God lament the bad use Antinomians make of their principles, I hope they will not be offended if I bear my testimony against a growing evil which they have frequently opposed themselves. While the *Calvinists* guard the Foundation against *Pharisees*, for which I return them my sincere thanks; they will, I hope, allow the *Remonstrants* to guard the Superstructure against *Antinomians*. If, in doing those good offices to the Church, we find ourselves obliged to bear a little hard upon the peculiar sentiments of our opposite friends, let us do it in such a manner as not to break the bonds of peace and brotherly kindness; so shall our honest reproofs become matter of useful exercise to that “love” which “thinketh no evil, hopeth all things,” rejoiceth even in the *galling* truth, and is neither quenched by many waters, nor damped by any opposition.

I have long wished to see, on both sides of the question about which we unhappily divide, moderate men step out of the unthinking, noisy crowd of their party, to look each other lovingly in the face, and to convince the world that, with impartial zeal, they will guard both the foundation and superstructure against all adversaries, those of their own party not excepted. Whoever does this, *omne tulit punctum*, he is a real friend to both parties, and to the whole Gospel; for he cordially embraces all the people of God, and joins in one blessed medium the seemingly incompatible extremes of scriptural truth. Ye men of clear heads, honest hearts, and humble loving spirits, nature and grace have formed you on purpose to do the Church this important service. Therefore, without regarding the bigots of your own party, in the

there is "no condemnation to them," whether they "walk after the Spirit" in love, or "after the flesh" in malice; whether they "forsake all" to follow Christ, or, like Judas and Sapphira, "keep back part" of what should be the Lord's without reserve. Thousands boldly profess justifying faith, and perhaps eternal justification, who reverence the commandments of God just as much as they regard the Scriptures quoted in Mr. Wesley's Minutes.

Upon their doctrinal systems they raise a tower of presumption, whence they bid defiance both to the law and Gospel of Jesus. His Law says, "Love God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself, that thou mayest live" in glory. "If thou wilt enter into the life," (of glory,) "keep the commandments." But this raises their pity, instead of commanding their respect and exciting their diligence. "Moses is buried," say they: "We have nothing to do with the law! We are *not* under the law to Christ! Jesus is not a Lawgiver to control, but a Redeemer to save us."

The Gospel cries to them, "Repent and believe!" and, just as if God was to be the penitent, believing sinner, they carelessly reply, "The Lord must do all; repentance and faith are *his* works; and they will be done in the day of his power:" And so, without resistance, they decently follow the stream of worldly vanities and fleshly lusts. St. Paul cries, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die." "We know better," answer they; "there are neither *ifs* nor conditions in all the Gospel." He adds, "This one thing I do, leaving the things that are behind, I press towards the mark for the prize of my high calling in Christ Jesus,—the crown of life: Be ye followers of me: Run also the race that is set before you." "What!" say

name of the loving Jesus, and by his catholic Spirit, give professors public lessons of *moderation* and *consistency*, and permit me to learn those rare virtues with thousands at your feet.

they, “would you have us *run and work for life?* Will you always harp upon that legal string, *Do! Do!*, instead of telling us that we have nothing to do, but to believe that all is done?” St. James cries, “Show your faith by your works; faith without works is dead” already, much more that which is accompanied by bad works. “What!” say they, “do you think the lamp of faith can be put out as a candle can be extinguished, by not being suffered to shine? We orthodox hold just the contrary: We maintain both that faith can never die, and that living faith is consistent not only with the omission of good works, but with the commission of the most horrid crimes.” St. Peter bids them “give all diligence to make their election sure, by adding to their faith virtue,” &c. “Legal stuff!” say they, “the covenant is well ordered in all things and sure: Neither will our virtue save us, nor our sins damn us.” St. John comes next and declares, “He that sinneth is of the devil.” “What!” say they, “do you think to make us converts to Arminianism, by thus insinuating that a man can be a child of God to-day, and a child of the devil to-morrow?” St. Jude advances last, and charges them to “keep themselves in the love of God;” and they supinely reply, “We can do nothing: Besides, we are as easy and as safe without a frame as with one.”

With the seven-fold shield of their Antinomian faith they would fight the twelve Apostles round, and come off, in their own imagination, more than conquerors. Nay, were Christ himself to come to them incognito, as he did to the disciples that went to Emmaus, and say, “Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect:” It would be well if, while they measured him from head to foot with looks of pity or surprise, some were not bold enough to say with a sneer, “You are a perfectionist, it seems, a follower of poor John Wesley! Are

you? For our part we are for Christ and *free grace*; but John Wesley and you are for *perfection and free will*."

Now, Sir, if any doctrine, humanly speaking, can rescue these mistaken persons out of so dreadful a snare, it is that which I contend for. Antinomian dreams vanish before it, as the noxious damps of the night before the rising sun. St. Paul, if they would but hear him *out*, with this one saying, as with a thousand rams' horns, would demolish all their Babels: "Circumcision is nothing, uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God;" Or, to speak agreeably to our times, "Before the tribunal of Christ, forms of godliness, Calvinian and Arminian notions, *are nothing*: Confessions of faith and recantations of error, past manifestations and former experiences, *are nothing*, but 'the keeping of the commandments of God;'" the very thing which Antinomians ridicule or neglect!

2. This doctrine is not less proper to animate feeble believers in their pursuit of holiness. O if it were clearly preached and steadily believed;—if we were fully persuaded, we shall soon appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to answer for every thought, word, and work; for every business we enter upon, every sum of money we lay out, every meal we eat, every pleasure we take, every affliction we endure, every hour we spend, every idle word we speak, yea, and every temper we secretly indulge;—if we knew we shall certainly give account of all the chapters we read, of all the prayers we offer, all the sermons we hear or preach, all the sacraments we receive; of all the motions of divine grace, all the beams of heavenly light, all the invitations of Christ, all the drawings of the Father, reproofs of our friends, and checks of our own consciences;—and if we were deeply conscious that every neglect of duty will rob us of a degree

of glory, and every wilful sin of a jewel in our crown, if not of our crown itself; what humble, watchful, holy, heavenly persons should we be! How serious and self-denying! How diligent and faithful! In a word, how angelical and divine, "in all manner of conversation!"

Did the *Woman*, the professing Church, cordially embrace this doctrine, she would no more stay "in the wilderness, *idly* talking of her Beloved;" but, actually "leaning upon him," she would "come out of it," in the sight of all her enemies. No more wrapped up in the showy cloud of ideal perfection or imaginary righteousness, and casting away her cold garments, her moon-like changes of merely doctrinal apparel, she would shine with the dazzling glory of her Lord, she would burn with the hallowing fires of his love: Once more she would be "clothed with the sun, and have the moon under her feet!"

Ye lukewarm talkers of Jesus's ardent love, if you were deeply conscious that nothing but love shall enter heaven, instead of judging of your growth in grace by the warmth with which you espouse the tenets of Calvin or Arminius, would you not instantly try your state by the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and by our Lord's alarming messages to the falling or fallen churches of Asia? Springing out of your Laodicean indifference, would you not earnestly pray for the "faith of the Gospel, the faith that works by *burning* love?" If the fire be kindled, would you not be afraid of putting it out by quenching the Spirit? Would you not even dread grieving him, lest your love should grow cold? Far from accounting the "shedding abroad of the love of God in your hearts" an unnecessary frame, would you not be straitened till you were baptized, every one of you, with "the Holy Ghost and with fire?"

Ye who hold the doctrine of perfection without "going on to perfection," and ye who explode it as a pernicious delusion, and inconsistently publish hymns of solemn prayer for it, how would you agree, from the bottom of your re-awakened hearts, to sing together, in days of peace and social worship, as you have carelessly sung asunder,

O for an heart to praise our God !  
An heart from sin set free !—

An heart in every thought renew'd,  
And fill'd with love divine !  
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,  
A copy, Lord, of thine.

Bigotry from us remove,  
Perfect all our souls in love, &c.

O ye Halcyon days ! Ye days of brotherly love and genuine holiness ! if you appeared to pacify and gladden our distracted Jerusalem, how soon would practical Christianity emerge from under the frothy billows of Antinomianism, and the proud waves of Pharisaism, which continually break against each other, and openly *foam out their own shame* ! *What carefulness* would godly sorrow work in us all ! *What clearing of ourselves* by casting away our dearest idols ! *What indignation* against our former lukewarmness ! *What fear of offending* either God or man ! *What vehement desire* after the full image of Christ ! *What zeal for his glory* ! And *what revenge* of our sins ! In *all things* we should approve ourselves, for the time to come, to be clear from the Antinomian delusion ! Then would we see what has seldom been seen in our age, distinct (not opposed) societies of meek professors of the *common faith*, walking in humble love, and supporting each other with cheerful readiness, like different battalions of the same invincible army. And if ever we perceived any contention among them, it would be only about the lowest place and

the most dangerous post. Instead of “striving for the mastery,” they would strive only who should stand truest to the standard of the cross, and best answer the neglected motto of the primitive Christians: *Non magna loquimur sed vivimus.* “Our religion does not consist in high words, but in good works.”

3. I observed that this doctrine will likewise reconcile seeming contradictions in the Scriptures, and fatal differences among Christians: Take one instance of the former: What can those who reject a second justification by works make of the solemn words of our Lord, already quoted, “By thy words thou shalt be justified,” or “by thy words thou shalt be condemned?” (Matt. xii. 37.) And by what art can they possibly reconcile them with St. Paul’s assertions, (Rom. iv. 5,) “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is imputed to him for righteousness?” and, verse 1, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?” Accept an example of the latter. In the Antinomian days of Dr. Crisp, arose the honest people we call Quakers. Shocked at the general abuse of the doctrine of justification by faith, they rashly inferred it could never be from God; and, seeing none *shall be justified* in glory but *the doers of the law*, they hastily concluded there is but one justification, namely, the being made inherently just, or the being sanctified, and then declared holy. Admit our doctrine, and you have both parts of the truth, that which the Antinomians hold against the Quakers, and that which the Quakers maintain against the Antinomians. Each alone is dangerous; both together mutually defend each other, and make up the scriptural doctrine of justification, which is invincibly guarded on the one hand by *faith* against Pharisees, and on the other, by *works* against Antinomians. Reader, may both be thy portion! So

shalt thou be eternally re-instated both in the favour and image of God.

VII. But while I enumerate the benefits which the Church will reap from a practical knowledge of our second justification by works, an honest Protestant, who has more zeal for, than acquaintance with, the truth, advances, with his heart full of holy indignation, and his mouth of objections which he says are unanswerable. Let us consider them one by one.

**FIRST OBJECTION.**—“Your Popish, Antichristian doctrine I abhor, and could even burn at a stake as a witness against it. Away with your new-fangled Arminian tenets! I am for old Christianity, and, with St. Paul, “determined to know nothing” for justification, “but Christ, and him crucified.”

**ANSWER.**—Are you indeed? Then I am sure you will not deny both Jesus Christ and St. Paul in this old Christian doctrine; for Christ says, “By thy words shalt thou be justified,” and St. Paul declares, “Not the hearers, but the doers of the law” of Christ “shall be justified.” Alas, how often are those, who say they *will know* and have nothing *but Christ*, the first to *set him at nought* as a Prophet, by railing at his holy doctrine; or to reject him as a King, by trampling upon his royal proclamations! But “I wot that through ignorance they do it, as do also their rulers.”

**SECOND OBJECTION.**—“This legal doctrine robs God’s dear children of their comforts and gospel liberty, binds Moses’s intolerable burden upon their free shoulders, and entangles them again in the galling yoke of bondage.”

**ANSWER.**—If God’s dear children have got into a false liberty of doing the devil’s works, either by not going into the vineyard when they have said, “Lord, I go,” or by beating their fellow-servants there, instead of working with them; the sooner

they are robbed of it the better; for if they continue thus free, they will, ere long, "be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness." It is the very spirit of Antinomianism to represent God's commandments as grievous, and the keeping of his law as bondage. Not so the dutiful children of God: Their hearts are never so much at liberty, as when they "run the way of his commandments," and so "fulfil the law of Christ." Keep them from obedience, and you keep them "in the snare of the devil, promising liberty" to others, "while they themselves are the servants of corruption."

Again: You confound the heavy yoke of the circumcision and ceremonial bondage, with which the Galatians once entangled themselves, with the easy yoke of Jesus Christ. The former was intolerable; the latter is so light a burden, that the only way to find rest unto our souls, is to take it upon us. St. Paul calls a dear brother his *yoke-fellow*: You know, the word Belial, in the original, signifies *without yoke*: They are sons of Belial who shake off the Lord's yoke; and though they should boast of their election as much as the Jews did, Christ himself will say concerning them, "Those mine enemies that" refused my yoke, and "would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me." So inexpressibly dreadful is the end of lawless liberty!

THIRD OBJECTION.—"Your doctrine is the damnable error of the Galatians, who madly left Mount Sion for Mount Sinai, made Christ the *Alpha* and not the *Omega*, and, after *having begun in the Spirit*, would be *made perfect by the flesh*. This is the other gospel which St. Paul thought so diametrically contrary to his own, that he wished the teachers of it, though they were angels of God, might be even *accursed and cut off*."

ANSWER.—You are under a capital mistake: St. Paul could never be so wild as to curse himself,

anathematize St. James, and wish the Messiah to be again cut off: For he himself taught the Romans, that "the doers of the law shall be justified;" St. James evidently maintains a justification by works; and our Lord expressly says, "By thy words thou shalt be justified." Again: The Apostle, as if he had foreseen how his epistle to the Galatians would be abused to Antinomian purposes, gives us in it the most powerful antidotes against that poison. Take two or three instances. 1. He exhorts his fallen converts to the fulfilling of all the law: "Love one another," says he, "for all the law is fulfilled in this one word, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" because none can love his neighbour as himself, but he that "loves God with all his heart." How different is this doctrine from the bold Antinomian cry, "We have nothing to do with the law!" 2. He enumerates the works of the flesh, "adultery, hatred, variance, wrath, strife, heresies, envyings," &c., "of which," says he, "I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they who do such things" shall not be justified in the day of judgment, or, which is the same thing, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." How different a gospel is this from that which insinuates "impenitent adulterers may be dear children of God, even while such, and in a very safe state, and quite sure of glory!" And, 3. As if this awful warning were not enough, he point-blank cautions his readers against the Crispian error: "Be not deceived," says he, "whatever a man" (not whatever Christ) "soweth, that he shall also reap: He that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit shall reap life everlasting." How amazingly strong, therefore, must your prejudice be, which makes you produce this epistle to thrust love and good works out of the important place allotted them in the Word of God! And nowhere more than in this very epistle!

FOURTH OBJECTION.—“Notwithstanding all you say, I am persuaded you are in the dreadful heresy of the Galatians, for they were, like you, for ‘*justification by the works of the law*;’ and St. Paul resolutely maintained against them the fundamental doctrine of *justification by faith*.”

ANSWER.—If you once read over the epistle to the Galatians without prejudice and without comment, you will see that, 1. They had returned “to the beggarly elements of this world,” by superstitiously “observing days, months, times, and years.” 2. Imagining they “could not be saved except they were circumcised,” they submitted even to that grievous and bloody injunction. 3. Exact in their useless ceremonies, and fondly hoping to be justified by their partial observance of Moses’s law, they well nigh forgot the merits of Christ, and openly trampled upon his law, and *walked after the flesh*. Stirred up to contentious zeal by their new teachers, they despised the old Apostle’s ministry, hated his person, and *devoured one another*. In short, they trusted partly in the merit of their superstitious performances, and partly in Christ’s merits; and on this preposterous foundation, they built the *hay* of Jewish ceremonies, and the *stubble* of fleshly lusts. With great propriety, therefore, the Apostle called them back, with sharpness, to the only sure foundation, the merits of Jesus Christ; and wanted them to build upon it *gold and precious stones*, all the works of piety and mercy, that spring from faith working by love.

Now which of these errors do we hold? Do we not preach present *justification by faith*, and *justification at the bar of God according to what a man soweth*,—the very doctrine of this epistle? And do we not “secure the foundation,” by insisting that both these justifications are equally through the *merits of Christ*,—though the second, as our Church intimates in her 12th Article, is by the evidence of works?

Will you bear with me if I tell you my thoughts? We are all in general condemned by the epistle to the Galatians; for we have too much dependance on our forms of piety, speculative knowledge, or past experience, and too little heart-felt confidence in the merits of Christ: We *sow* too little *to the Spirit*, and too much *to the flesh*. But those, in the next place, are peculiarly reproved by it, who "return to the beggarly elements," the idle ways and vain fashions "of this world:"—Those who make as much ado about the beggarly element of water, about baptizing infants and dipping adults, as the *troublers* of the Church of Galatia did about circumcising their converts, that they might *glory in their flesh*:—Those who *zealously afflict* others but *not well*:—Those who now despise their spiritual fathers, "whom they once received as angels of God":—Those "who turn our enemies when we tell them the truth, who heap to themselves teachers" smoother than the evangelically legal Apostle, and would call us blind, if we said as he does, "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another:" (Gal. vi. 4:)—Those who plead for spiritual bondage while they talk of gospel liberty, and affirm that the *son of the bond woman* shall always live with the *son of the free*; that sin can never be cast out of the heart of believers; and that Christ and corruption shall always dwell together in this world:—And lastly, those who say there is no *falling away from grace* when they are already fallen like the Galatians, and boast of their stability chiefly because they are ignorant of their fall!

FIFTH OBJECTION.—"However, your Pharisaic doctrine flatly contradicts the Gospel summed up by our Lord, (Mark xvi. 16,) 'He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.' Here is not one word about works, all turns upon faith."

ANSWER.—Instead of throwing such hints, you might as well speak out at once, and say that Christ in these words flatly contradicts what he had said, Matt. xii. 37, “By thy words thou shalt be justified,” or “by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” But drop your prejudices, and you will see that the contradiction is only in your own ideas. We steadily assert, as our Lord, that *he who believeth, or endureth unto the end believing*, (for the word implies both the reality and continuance of the action,) *shall infallibly be saved*; because *faith*, which continues living, *works* to the last *by love* and good works, which will infallibly justify us in the day of judgment. For when faith is no more, love and good works will evidence, 1. That we were grafted into Christ by true faith: 2. That we did not *make shipwreck of the faith*:—That we were not *taken away* as branches in Him which bear not fruit, but abode fruitful branches in the True Vine: And, 3. That we are still in him by *holy love*, the precious and eternal fruit of true persevering faith. How bad is that cause which must support itself by charging an imaginary contradiction upon the wisdom of God, Jesus Christ himself!\*

\* This is frequently the stratagem of those who have no arguments to produce. I bore my testimony against it in the Vindication, and flattered myself that serious writers would be less forward to oppose the truth, and expose the Ministers of Christ, by that injudicious way of discussing controverted points. Notwithstanding this, I have before me a little pamphlet, in which the Editor endeavours to *answer* Mr. W.’s *Minutes*, by extracting from his writings passages supposed to stand in direct opposition to the Minutes. Hence, in a burlesque upon the *Declaration*, he tries to represent Mr. W. as a knave.

I would just observe upon that performance, 1. That by this method of raising dust, and avoiding to reason the case fairly, every malicious infidel may blind injudicious readers, and make triumphing scoffers cry out, “Jesus against Christ! Saul against St. Paul! or John the Divine against John the Evangelist!” as well as Wesley against John! and John against Wesley! 2. Mr. W. having acknowledged in the beginning of the Minutes, he “had

SIXTH OBJECTION.—“Your doctrine exalts man, and, by giving him room to boast, robs Christ of the glory of his grace. *The top-stone is no more brought forth with shouting, Grace! Grace!* but Works! Works! *unto it*; and the burden of the song in heaven will be,—Salvation to *our works!* —and no more, ‘Salvation to the Lamb!’”

ANSWER.—I no less approve your godly jealousy, than I wonder at your groundless fears. To calm them, permit me once more to observe, 1. That this doctrine is Christ’s, who would not be so un-

leaned too much towards Calvinism,” we may naturally expect to meet, in his voluminous writings, with a few expressions that look a little towards Antinomianism; and with some paragraphs, which (when detached from the context, and not considered as spoken to deep mourners in Zion, or to souls of undoubted sincerity) seem directly to favour the delusion of the present times. 3. This may easily be accounted for, without flying to the charges of knavery, or contradiction. When, after working long without cheering light, we discover the ravishing day of luminous faith, we are all apt, in the sincerity of our hearts, to speak almost as unguardedly of works, as Luther did; but when the fire of Antinomian temptations has frequently burned us, and consumed thousands around us, we justly dread it at last; and, ceasing to lean towards Crisp’s Divinity, we return to St. James, St. John, and St. Jude, and the latter part of St. Paul’s Epistles, which he too often overlooked, and to which hardly two Ministers did, upon the whole, ever do more justice than Mr. Baxter and Mr. W. 4. A man who gives to different people, or to the same people at different times, directly contrary directions, does not always contradict himself. I have a fever, and my physician, under God, restores me to health by cooling medicines; by and by I am afflicted with the cold rheumatism, and he prescribes fomentations and warming remedies, but my injudicious apothecary opposes him, under pretence that he goes by *no certain rule* and *grossly contradicts himself*. Let us apply this to Mr. W. and the Versifier, remembering there is less difference between a burning fever and a cold rheumatism, than between the case of the trifling Antinomian, and that of the dejected penitent. 5. Whoever considers without prejudice what our satiric Poet produces as *contradictions*, will find some of them do not so much as amount to an *opposition*, and that most of them do not seem so contradictory, as numbers of propositions that might be extracted from the Oracles of God. If the *Editor* of the *Answer to the Minutes* will compare this note with the 30th page of the *Vindication*, I hope he will find his performance answered, his direct attack upon the *Minutes* frustrated, and Mr. W.’s honesty fully vindicated.

wise as to side with our self-righteous pride, and to teach us to rob him of his own glory. It is absurd to suppose Christ would be thus against Christ; for even *Satan* is too wise to be against *Satan*. 2. Upon our plan, as upon Crisp's scheme, *free grace* has absolutely *all* the glory. The love and good works by which we shall be justified in the day of judgment, are the fruits of faith, and "faith is the gift of God." Christ, the great object of faith, and the Holy Ghost, called the Spirit of faith, the power of believing, the means, opportunities, and will, to use that power, are *all* the rich presents of God's *free grace*. All our sins, together with the imperfections of our works, are mercifully forgiven through the blood and righteousness of Christ: Our persons and services are graciously accepted merely for his sake, and through his merits: And if rewards are granted us according to the fruits of righteousness we bear, it is not because *we* are profitable to God, but because the meritorious sap of the Root of David produces those fruits, and the meritorious beams of the Sun of Righteousness ripen them.— Thus you see, that, which way soever you look at our justification, God has *all* the glory of it, but that of turning moral agents into mere machines,—a glory which we apprehend God does no more claim, than you do that of turning your coach-horses into hobby-horses, and your servants into puppets.

If *faith* on earth gives Christ the glory of all our salvation, you need not fear that *love* (a superior grace) will rob him in heaven; for "love is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, and does not behave herself unseemly" towards a beggar on earth; much less will she do so towards the Lord of glory, when she has attained the zenith of heavenly perfection. Away then with all the imaginary lions you place in your way to truth! Not-

withstanding Crisp's prohibitions, like the Bereans, receive Christ in his *holy* doctrine, and be persuaded that, in the last day, you will shout as loud as the honest Doctor, *Grace! Grace! and Salvation to the Lamb!* without suggesting with him, to those on the left hand, the blasphemous shouts of *Partiality! Hypocrisy! Barbarity and Damnation to the Lamb!* Thus shall you have all the *free grace* he justly boasts of, without any of his horrid reprobating doctrine.

**SEVENTH OBJECTION.**—“How will the converted thief that did no good works be justified by works?”

**ANSWER.**—We mean by *works*, *the whole of our inward tempers and outward behaviour*; and how do you know the *outward behaviour* of the converted thief? Did not his reproofs, exhortations, prayers, patience, and resignation, evidence the liveliness of his faith, as there was time and opportunity? 2. Can you suppose his *inward temper* was not *love* to God and man? Could he go *into Paradise* without being born again? Or could he be born again and not love? Is it not said, “He that loveth is born of God;” consequently, he that is born of God loveth? Again: Does not he who “loveth fulfil all the law,” and do, as says Augustine, all good works in one? And is not “the fulfilling of the law of Christ,” work enough to justify the converted thief by that law?

**EIGHTH OBJECTION.**—“You say that your doctrine ‘will make us zealous of good works;’ but I fully discharge it from that office: For ‘the love of Christ constraineth us’ to abound in every good word and work.”

**ANSWER.**—1. St. Paul, who spoke those words with more feeling than you, thought the contrary; as well as his blessed Master, or they would never have taught this doctrine. You do not, I fear, evidence the temper of a *babe*, when you are so

exceedingly wise above what Christ preached, and prudent above what the Apostle wrote. 2. If the love of Christ in professors is so constraining as you say, why do good works and good tempers bear so little proportion to the great talk we hear of its irresistible efficacy? And why do those who have tasted it, "return to sin as dogs to their vomit?" Why can they even curse, swear, and get drunk? be guilty of idolatry, murder, and incest? 3. If love alone is always sufficient, why did our Lord work upon his disciples' hearts by the hope of "thrones and a kingdom," and by the fear of a "a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched?" Why does the Apostle stir up believers to "serve the Lord with godly fear," by the consideration that "He is a consuming fire?" illustrating his assertion by this awful warning, "If they (Corah and his company) escaped not," but were consumed by fire from heaven, because they "refused him (Moses) that spake on earth; much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven!" Why did St. Paul himself, who, no doubt, understood the Gospel as well as Crisp and Saltmarsh, "run a race for an incorruptible crown, and keep his body under lest he himself should be a cast-away?" O ye *orthodox* Divines, and thou ludicrous versifier of an awful Declaration! instead of attempting to set Paul against Paul, and to oppose Wesley to Wesley, answer these scriptural questions; and if you cannot do it without betraying *heterodoxy*, for the Lord's sake, for the sake of thousands in Israel, keep no more from the feeble of the flock those necessary helps, which the "very chief of the Apostles," evangelical Paul, without any of your Crispian refinements, continually recommended to others and daily used himself. And for your own soul's sake, never more prostitute these awful words, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" never

more apply them to yourselves, while you refuse to treat the most venerable ambassador of Christ, I shall not say, with *respectful love*, but with *common decency*.

**NINTH OBJECTION.**—“ All the formal and pharisaical Ministers who are sworn enemies to Christ and the Gospel of his grace, preach your legal doctrine of ‘ justification by works in the day of judgment.’ ”

**ANSWER.**—And what do you infer from it? that the doctrine is false? If the inference be just, it will follow there is neither heaven nor hell; for they publicly maintain the existence of both. But suppose they now and then preach our doctrine without zeal, without living according to it, or without previously preaching the Fall, and a present Justification by Faith in Christ, productive of peace and power, what can be expected from it? Would not the doctrine of the Atonement itself be totally useless, if it were preached under such disadvantages? The truth is, such Ministers are only for the roof, and you, it seems, only for the foundation. But a roof, unsupported by solid walls, crushes to death, and a foundation without a roof is not much better than the open air. Therefore, “ wise master-builders,” like St. Paul, are for having both in their proper places. Like him, when the foundation is well laid, “ leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, they go on to perfection ;” nor will they forget, as they work out their salvation, to shout, “ Grace! Grace!,” to the last slate that covers in the building; or to “ the top-stone,” the key that binds the solid arch.

**TENTH OBJECTION.**—“ Should I receive and avow such a doctrine, the generality of professors would rise against me; and while the warmest would call me a *Papist, an Antichrist*, and what not; my dearest Christian friends would pity me as an unawakened Pharisee, and fear me as a blind Legalist.”

ANSWER.—“ Rejoice and be exceeding glad when all men ” (the godly not excepted) “ shall say all manner of evil of you falsely for Christ’s sake,”—for preferring Christ’s holy doctrine to the loose tenets of Dr. Crisp : And remember, that, in our Antinomian days, it is as great an honour to be called *legal* by fashionable professors, as to be branded with the name of *Methodist* by the sots who glory in their shame.

VIII. As I would hope my objector is either satisfied or silenced, before I conclude, permit me a moment, Reverend Sir, to consider the two important objections which you, directly or indirectly, make in your Narrative.

1. “ I should tremble,” say you, (page 21,) “ lest some bold metaphysician should affirm that a second justification by works is quite consistent with what is contained in Mr. W.’s Declaration ; but that it is expressed in such *strong and absolute terms*, as must *for ever* put the most exquisite refinements of metaphysical distinctions *at defiance*.”

ANSWER.—“ For ever *at defiance* !”—You surprise me, Sir : I, who am as perfect a stranger to “ *exquisite refinements* ” as to Crisp’s *eternal justification*, defy you (pardon a *bold* expression to a *bold metaphysician*) ever to produce out of Mr. W.’s Declaration, I shall not say (as you do) “ *strong and absolute terms*,” but one single word or tittle denying or excluding a second justification by works ; and I appeal both to your second thoughts and to the unprejudiced world, whether these three propositions of the Declaration, “ We have no trust or confidence, but in the alone *merits* of Christ *for* justification in the day of judgment :— Works have no part in *meriting* or *purchasing* our justification from first to last, *either in whole or in part* :—He is not a real Christian believer (and consequently cannot be saved) *who does not good works* where there is time and opportunity :”—I

appeal, I say, to the unprejudiced world, whether these three propositions are not highly consistent with this assertion of our Lord, "By thy words thou shalt be justified," that is, "Although from first to last, the *merits* of my life and death *purchase*, or *deserve*, thy justification; yet in the day of judgment thou shalt be justified by *thy works*; that is, thy justification, which is purchased by my merits, will entirely turn upon the *evidence* of thy works, according to the time and opportunity thou hast to do them."

Who does not see that to be justified by the *evidence* of works, and to be justified by the *merit* of works, are no more phrases of the same import than *Minutes* and *heresy* are words of the same signification? The latter proposition contains the error strongly guarded against both in the Declaration and in the Minutes: The former contains an evangelical doctrine, as agreeable to the Declaration and Minutes as to the Scriptures; a doctrine of which we were too sparing when we "leaned too much towards Calvinism," but to which, after the example of Mr. W., we are now determined to do justice.

Whoever is "ashamed of Christ's words," we will proclaim them to the world. Both from our pulpits and the press we will say, "By thy words thou shalt be condemned."—Yea, "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool!, shall be in danger of hell-fire; and whosoever maketh a lie shall have his part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone;" for as "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," or disbelieveth to unrighteousness, so "with the mouth confession is made to salvation," or "hard speeches" are uttered to "damnation." Reserve, therefore, Reverend Sir, your public praises for a more proper occasion than that which caused their breaking out in your Narrative. "Blessed be God," say you, (page 16,)

"Mr. Wesley and fifty-three of his Preachers do not agree with Mr. Olivers in the material article of a second justification by works." Indeed, Sir, you are greatly mistaken, for we *do* agree with him, and shall continue so to do, till you have proved he does not agree with Jesus Christ, or that our doctrine is not perfectly consistent both with the Scripture and the Declaration.

2. Your second objection is not so formal as the first; it must be made up of broad *hints*, scattered through your Narrative, and they amount to this, "Your pretended difference between justification by the merit of works, by the *evidence* of works, and between a first and second justification, is founded upon the *subtleties of metaphysical distinctions*: If what you say wears the aspect of truth, it is because *you give a new turn to error, by the almost magical power of metaphysical distinctions*."

(Pages 16, 20, 21.)

Give me leave, Sir, to answer this objection by two appeals, one to the most ignorant collier in my parish, and the other to your own sensible child; and if they can at once understand my meaning, you will see that my *metaphysical distinctions*, as you are pleased to call them, are nothing but the *dictates of common sense*. I begin with the collier:

"Thomas, I stand here before the Judge, accused of having robbed the Reverend Mr. Shirley, near Bath, last month, on such an evening; can you speak a word for me?" Thomas turns to the Judge, and says, "Please your honour, the accusation is false; for our Parson was in Madeley-Wood; and I can make oath of it, for he even reproved me for swearing at our pit's mouth that very evening." By his evidence the Judge acquits me. Now, Sir, ask cursing Tom, whether I am acquitted and *justified* by his *merits*, or by the simple *evidence* he has given, and he will tell you, "Ay, to be sure, by the *evidence*: Though I am

no scholar, I know very well if our Methodist Parson is not hanged, it is none of my deservings." Thus, Sir, an ignorant collier, as great a stranger to *your metaphysics* as you are to his *mandrell*, discovers at once a material difference between justification by the *evidence*, and justification by the *merits*, of a witness.

My second appeal is to your sensible child. By a plain comparison I hope to make him at once understand both the difference there is between our first and second justification, and the propriety of that difference. The lovely boy is old enough, I suppose, to follow the gardener and me to yonder nursery. Having shown him the operation of grafting, and pointing at the crab-tree newly grafted, "My dear child," would I say, "though hitherto this tree has produced nothing but crabs, yet, by the skill of the gardener, who has just fixed in it that good little branch, it is now made an apple-tree: I *justify* and warrant it such." (Here is an emblem of our *first* justification *by faith*!) "In three or four years, if we live, we will come again and see it: If it thrive and 'bear fruit,' well; we shall then by that mark justify it a second time, we shall declare that it is a *good* apple-tree indeed, and fit to be transplanted from this wild nursery into a delightful orchard. But if we find that the old crab-stock, instead of nourishing the graft, spends all its sap in producing wild shoots and sour crabs; or if it is a 'tree whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead,' (dead in the graft and in the stock,) 'plucked up by the root,' or quite cankered, far from declaring it 'a good tree,' we shall pass sentence of condemnation upon it, and say, 'Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? For every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.'" Here is an emblem of our *second* justification *by works*, or of the condemnation that will infallibly overtake those

Laodicean professors and wretched apostates, whose faith is not shown by works, where there is time and opportunity.

Instead of offering an insult to your superior understanding, in attempting to explain, by *metaphysical distinctions*, what, I suppose, your sensible child has already understood by the help of a grafting-knife, I shall leave you to consider whether Scripture, reason, and candour, do not join their influence to make you acknowledge, at least in the court of your own conscience, that you have put as wrong a construction upon Mr. W.'s Declaration as upon his Minutes, and by that means inadvertently given another *rash* touch to the ark of practical religion, and to the character of one of the greatest Ministers in the world. I am, with due respect,  
Honoured and Reverend Sir,

Your obedient Servant in the bond of  
the practical Gospel of Christ,  
THE VINDICATOR.

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## LETTER II.

HON. AND REV. SIR,

HAVING endeavoured in my last to do justice to the practical Gospel of Christ, and Mr. W.'s awful Declaration; I pass on to the other mistakes of your Narrative. That which strikes me next is, —“the public recantation of your *useful* Sermons, in the face of the whole world.” (Page 22.)

I. O Sir, what have you done? Do you not know that your Sermons contain not only the legally evangelical doctrine of the Minutes, but likewise all the doctrines which moderate Calvinists esteem the marrow of the Gospel? And shall all be treated alike? “Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee

to do after this manner?" Thus did a good man formerly plead the cause of a wicked city, and thus I plead that of your *good Sermons*; those twelve valuable, though unripe, fruits of your ministerial labours. Upon this plea, the infamous city would have been spared, had only *ten* good men been found in it. Now, Sir, spare a valuable book for the sake of a *thousand* excellent things it contains. But if you are inflexible, and still wish it "burned," imitate at least the kind angels who sent Lot out of the fiery overthrow, and except all the evangelical pages of the unfortunate volume.

Were it not ridiculous to compare wars which cost us only a little ink, and our friends a few pence, to those which cost armies their blood, and kingdoms their treasures, I would be tempted to say to you, Imitate the Dutch in their last effort to balance the victory, and secure the field. When they are pressed by the French, rather than yield, they break their dykes, let in the sea upon themselves, and lay all their fine gardens and rich pastures under water: But before they have recourse to that strange expedient, they prudently save all the valuable goods they can. Why should you not follow them in their prudential care, as you seem to do in their bold stratagem? When you publicly lay your useful book under the bitter waters of an anathema, why do you save absolutely nothing? Why must gospel truths, more precious than the wealth of Holland and the gold of Ophir, lie for ever under the severe scourge of your recantation? Suppose you had "recanted" your Third Sermon, *The Way to eternal Life*, in opposition to Mysticism; and burned the Fourth, *Salvation by Christ for Jews and Gentiles*, in honour of Calvinism, could you not have spared the rest?

If you say, you may do what you please with your own; I answer, Your book publicly exposed to sale, and bought perhaps by thousands, is in one

sense, no more your own ; it belongs to the purchasers, before whom you lay, I fear, a dangerous example : For when they shall hear that the author has "publicly recanted it in the face of the whole world," it will be a temptation to them to slight the Gospel it contains, and perhaps to "ridicule it in the face of the whole world."

You add, "It savours too strongly of *Mysticism*." Some passages are a little tainted with Mr. Law's capital error, and you might have pointed them out ; but if you think *mysticism* is intrinsically bad, you are under a mistake. One of the greatest *mystics*, next to Solomon, is Thomas a Kempis ; and a few errors excepted, I would no more burn his *Imitation of Jesus Christ* than the "Song of Solomon," and Mr. Romaine's edifying paraphrase of the 107th Psalm.

You urge also, your Sermons "savour too much of free will." Alas ! Sir, can you recant *free will*? Was not your will as *free* when you recanted your sermons as when you composed them ? Is there not as much *free will* expressed in this one line of the Gospel as in all your sermons, "I would have gathered you, and ye would not?" Do not "free-will offerings with an holy worship," delight the Lord more than *forced*, and, if I may be allowed the expression, *bound-will* services ? Is not the *free will*, with which the martyrs went to the stake, as worthy of our highest admiration, as the *mysticism* of the Canticles is of our deepest attention ? If all that strongly "savours of free will" must be *burned*, ye heavens ! what Smithfield work will there be in your lued plains ! Woe to saints ! Woe to angels ! for they are all *free-willing* beings,—all full of *free will* : Nor can you deny it, unless you suppose they are *bound* by irresistible decrees, as the Heathens fancied their deities were *hampered* with the adamantine chains of an imaginary something they called *fate* ; witness their *Fata vetant*, and *Fata jubent*, and *ineluctabile Fatum*.

Pardon, Reverend Sir, the oddity of these exclamations. I am so grieved at the great advantage we give infidels against the gospel, by making it ridiculous, that I could try even the method of Horace, to bring my friends back, from the fashionable refinements of Crisp, to the plain truth as it is in Jesus :

*Ridiculum acri  
Fortius ac melius stultas plerumque secat res.*

Nor is this the only bad tendency of your new doctrine : For by exploding the *freedom* of the will, you rob us of *free agency* ; you afford the wicked, who determine to continue in sin, the best excuse in the world to do it without either shame or remorse ; you make us mere machines, and indirectly reflect upon the wisdom of our Lord for saying to a set of Jewish machines, “I would, and ye would not.” But what is still more deplorable, you inadvertently represent it an unwise thing in God to judge the world in righteousness : and your new glass shows his vindictive justice in the same unfavourable light, in which England saw, two years ago, the behaviour of a great monarch, who was exposed in the public papers for unmercifully cutting with a whip, and tearing with spurs, the horses worked in a tapestry of his royal apartment, because they did not prance and gallop at his nod.

If a commendable, but immoderate fear of Pelagius’s doctrine drove you into that of Augustine, the oracle of all the Dominicans, Thomists, Jansenists, and all other Roman Catholic predestinarians, you need not go so far beyond him as to recant all your Sermons, because you mention, perhaps three or four times, the freedom of our will, in the whole volume. “Let no one,” says judicious Melanethon, “be offended at the word *free will*, (*liberum arbitrium*,) for Augustine himself uses it in many volumes, and that almost in every page, even to the surfeit of the reader.”

The most ingenious Calvinist that ever wrote against *free will*, is, I think, Mr. Edwards of New-England.. And his fine system turns upon a comparison by which it may be overturned, and the *freedom* of the will demonstrated.

"The will," says he, (if I remember right,) "is like an even balance, which can never turn without a weight, and must *necessarily* turn with one."—But whence comes the weight that *necessarily* turns it? "From the understanding," answers he; "the last dictate of the understanding *necessarily* turns the will."—And is the understanding also *necessarily* determined? "Yes, by the effect which the objects around us necessarily have upon us, and by the circumstances in which we *necessarily* find ourselves; so that from first to last, our tempers, words, and actions *necessarily* follow each other, and the circumstances that give them birth, as the second, third, and fourth links of a chain follow the first, when it is drawn along. Hence the eternal, infallible, irresistible, universal concatenation of events, both in the moral and material world." This is, if I mistake not, the scheme of that great Divine, and he spends no less than four hundred and fourteen large pages in trying to establish it.

I would just observe upon it, that it makes the First Cause, or First Mover, the only *free agent* in the world; all others being *necessarily* bound with the chain of his decrees, drawn along by the irresistible motion of his arm, or, which is the same, entangled in *forcible* circumstances unalterably fixed by his immutable counsel.

And yet, even upon this scheme, you needed not, Sir, be so afraid of free will; for if the will be like an even balance, it is free in itself, though it is only with what I beg leave to call a "mechanical freedom;" for an even balance, you know, is *free* to turn either way.

But with respect to our ingenious author's asser-

tion, that the will cannot turn without a weight, because an even balance cannot; I must consider it as a mere begging the question, if not as an absurdity. What is a balance, but lifeless matter? And what is the will, but the living, active soul, springing up in its willing capacity, and self-exerting, self-determining power? O how tottering is the mighty fabric raised, I shall not say upon such a fine-spun metaphysical speculation, but upon so weak a foundation as a comparison, which supposes that two things so widely different as spirit and matter, a living soul and a lifeless balance, are exactly alike with reference to self-determination! Just as if a spirit, made after the image of the living, free, and powerful God, was no more capable of determining itself, than an horizontal beam supporting two equal copper bowls by six silken strings!

I am sorry, Sir, to dissent from such a respectable Divine as yourself; but, as I have no taste for new refinements, and cannot even conceive how actions can be morally good or evil, any farther than our free will is concerned in them, I must follow the universal experience of mankind, and side with the author of the Sermons against the author of the Narrative, concerning the freedom of the will.

Nor is this freedom derogatory to free grace; for as it was free grace that gave an upright free will to Adam at his creation, so whenever his fallen children think or act aright, it is because their free will is mercifully prevented, touched, and so far rectified by free grace.

However, it must be granted that many fashionable professors, and the large book of Mr. Edwards, are for you; but when you maintained "the freedom of the will," Jesus Christ and the Gospel were on your side. To the end of the world this plain peremptory assertion of our Lord, "I would and ye would not," will alone throw down the sophisms,

and silence the objections, of the most subtle philosophers against free will. When I consider what it implies, far from supposing that the will is a lifeless pair of scales, necessarily turned by the least weight; I see it is such a strong, self-determining power, that it can resist the effect of the most amazing weights; keep itself inflexible under all the warnings, threatenings, miracles, promises, entreaties, and tears of the Son of God; and remain obstinately unmoved under the strivings of his Holy Spirit. Yes, put in one scale the most stupendous weights, for instance, the hopes of heavenly joys, and the dread of hellish torments; and only the gaudy feather of honour, or the breaking bubble of worldly joy in the other; if the will casts itself into the light scale, the feather or bubble will instantly preponderate. Nor is the power of the rectified will less wonderful; for though you should put all the kingdoms of the world and their glory in the scale, and nothing but the reproach of Christ in the other; yet if the will *freely* leap into the infamous scale, a crown of thorns easily outweighs a thousand golden crowns, and a devouring flame makes ten thousand thrones kick the beam.

Thns it appears the will can be persuaded, but never forced. You may bend it by moral suasions: But if you do this farther than it freely gives way, you *break*, you absolutely *destroy* it. A will forced is no more a *will*, it is mere *compulsion*; freedom is not less essential to it, than moral agency to man. Nor do I go, in these observations upon the freedom of the will, one step farther than honest John Bunyan, whom all the Calvinists so deservedly admire. In his *Holy War* he tells us, there is but one *Lord Will-be-Will* in the town of Man's-soul; whether he serves Diabolus or Shaddai, he is *Lord Will-be-Will* still, “a man of great strength, resolution, and courage, whom in his occasion no one

can turn," if he do not freely turn or yield to be turned.

I hope, Sir, these hints upon the harmlessness of *mysticism*, and the important doctrine of our *free agency*, will convince you, and the purchasers of your Sermons, that you have been too precipitate in *publicly recounting them in the face of the whole world*, especially the *ninth*.

If you ask why I particularly interest myself in behalf of that one discourse, I will let you into the mystery. At the first reading, I liked and adopted it; I cut it out of the volume in which it was bound, put it in my sermon-case, and preached it in my church. The title of it is, you know, "Justification by Faith;" and among several striking things on the subject, you quote twice this excellent passage out of our Homilies: "Justification by faith implies a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that by the *merits* of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he is reconciled to the favour of God." O Sir, why did not you except it in your recantation, both for the honour of our Church and your own?

Were I to print and disperse such an advertisement as this: "Eight years ago I preached in my church a sermon entitled 'Justification by Faith,' composed by the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Shirley, to convince Papists and Pharisees that we are accepted through the alone *merits* of Christ; but I see better now; *I wish this sermon had been burned, and I publicly recant it in the face of the whole world;*" how would the Popish Priest of Madeley rejoice! And how will that of Loughrea triumph, when he hears you have actually done it in your Narrative! What will your Protestant parishioners, to whom your book is dedicated, say, when the surprising news reaches Ireland? And what will the world think, when they see you warmly plead in August for *Justification by Faith*, as being "the foundation that

must by all means be secured!" and publicly recant in September your own excellent sermon "on Justification by Faith?"

Indeed, Sir, though I admire your candour in acknowledging there are some exceptionable passages in your discourses, and your humility in readily given them up, I can no more approve of your readiness in making, than insisting upon, *formal recantations*. We cannot be too careful in dealing in that kind of ware; and it is extremely dangerous to do it by wholesale; as by that means we may give up, or *seem* to give up, *before the whole world*, precious truths, delivered by Christ himself, and brought down to us in streams of the blood of martyrs.

Among some blunt expostulations that Mr. Wesley erased in my fifth letter, as being too severe, he kindly, but unhappily, struck out this: "*Before* you could with candour insist upon a recantation of Mr. W.'s Minutes, should you not have recanted yourself the passages of your own Sermons, where the same doctrines are maintained; and have sent your recantation through the land, together with your Circular Letter?" Had this been published, it might have convinced you of the unseasonableness of your recantation; thus this *second hasty step* would have been prevented; and if I dwell so long upon it now, believe me, Sir, it is chiefly to prevent a *third*.

And now your Sermons are recanted, is the Vindication of Mr. W.'s Minutes invalidated?—Not at all; for you have not yet recanted the Bath Hymn-Book; nor can you ever get Mr. Henry, Mr. Williams, and a tribe of other Anti-Crispian, though Calvinist, Divines, now in glory, to recant with you; much less the Prophets, Apostles, and Christ himself, on whose irrefragable testimony we chiefly rest our doctrine.

II. As I have pleaded out the cause of *free will*

against bound-will, or that of your Sermons against your Narrative, and am insensibly come to the Vindication; give me leave, Sir, to speak a word also for that performance and the author of it.

You say he has “attempted a Vindication of the Minutes;” but do not some people think he has likewise *executed* it? And have you proved he has not?

You reply, “There would be a great impropriety in my giving a full and particular answer to those letters, because the author did all he could to revoke them, and has given me ample satisfaction in his letter of submission.” Indeed, Sir, you quite mistook the nature of that *submission*: It had absolutely no reference to the *arguments* of the Vindication. It only respected the *polemic dress* in which the Vindicator had put them. You might have been convinced of it by this paragraph of his letter of submission: “I was going to preach when I had the news of your happy accommodation, and was no sooner out of church, than I wrote to beg my Vindication might not appear in the *dress* in which I had put it. I did not then, nor do I yet, repent having written upon the Minutes; but as *matters are now*, I am very sorry I did not write in a general manner, without taking notice of the Circular Letter and mentioning your dear name.”— He begs, therefore, you will not consider his letter of submission as a reason for not giving a *full or particular answer* to his *arguments*: On the contrary, if you can prove they want solidity, a *letter of thanks* shall follow his *letter of submission*; if he be wrong, he sincerely desires to be set right.

You add, however, that he has “broken the Minutes into sentences and half sentences, and, by refining upon each of the detached particles, has given a new turn to the whole.” But he appeals to every impartial reader whether he has not, like a candid man, first considered them all together, and

then every one asunder. He begs to be informed whether an artist can better inquire into the goodness of a watch, than by making first his observations on the whole movement in general, and then by taking it to pieces, that he may examine every part with greater attention. And he desires you would show whether, what you are pleased to call a new turn, is not preferable to the heretical turn some persons give them; and whether it is not equally, if not better, adapted to the literal meaning of the words, as well as more agreeable to the Antinomian state of the Church, the general tenor of the propositions, and the system of doctrine maintained by Mr. Wesley for near forty years?

The Vindicator objects, likewise, to your asserting, page 21, that "when he first saw the Minutes, he expressed to Lady Huntingdon his *abhorrence* of them:" Had you said *surprise*, the expression would have been strictly just; but that of *abhorrence* is far too strong. Her Ladyship, who testified her *detestation* of them in the strongest terms, might easily mistake his *abhorrence* of the sense fixed upon the Minutes, for an abhorrence of the Minutes themselves; but she may recollect that, far from ever granting they had that sense, he said, again and again, even in their first conversation upon them, "Certainly, my Lady, Mr. W. can mean no such thing: He will explain himself."

But supposing he had at first been so far influenced by the jealous fears of Lady Huntingdon, as to express as great an *abhorrence* of the Minutes, as the mistaken disciples did of the person of our Lord, when they took him for an apparition, and *cried out for fear*; would this have excused either him or you, Sir, for resolutely continuing in a mistake, in the midst of a variety of means and calls to escape from it? And if the Vindicator, before he had weighed the Minutes in the balance of the sanctuary, had even taken his pen, and condemned

them as dangerously legal, what could you fairly have concluded from it, but that he was not partial to Mr. W., and had also "leaned so much towards Calvinism," as not instantly to discover and *rejoice in the truth?*

In your last page you take your friendly leave of the Vindicator, by saying, you "desire in love to cast a veil over all apparent mistakes of his judgment on this occasion;" but as he is not conscious of *all* these *apparent mistakes*, he begs you would in love take off the veil you have cast upon them, that he may see and rectify at least those which are capital.

III. And that you may not hastily conclude he was *mistaken* in his Vindication of that article that touches upon *merit*, he embraces this opportunity of presenting you with another quotation from the John Wesley of the last century; he means Mr. Baxter, the most judicious Divine, as well as the greatest, most useful, and most laborious Preacher of his age.

In his *Catholic Theology*, answering the objections of an Antinomian, he says: "*Merit* is a word I perceive you are against; you may therefore choose any other of the same signification, and we will forbear this, rather than offend you. But tell me, 1. What if the words  $\alpha\xi\omega\varsigma$  and  $\alpha\xi\alpha\varsigma$  were translated *deserving* and *merit*, would it not be as true a translation as *worthy* and *worthiness*, when it is the same thing that is meant? 2. Do not all the ancient teachers of the Churches, since the Apostles, particularly apply the names  $\alpha\xi\alpha\varsigma$  and *meritum* to believers? And if you persuade men that all these teachers were Papists, will you not persuade most that believe you, to be Papists too? 3. Are not *reward* and *merit* or *desert* relative words, as *punishment* and *guilt*, *master* and *servant*, *husband* and *wife*? And is there any reward which is not *meriti præmium*; the reward of some merit? Again:

" Is it not the second article of our faith, and next to *believing there is a God*, that 'He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him?'— When you thus extirpate faith and godliness, on pretence of crying down *merit*, you see what *over-doing* tends to. And, indeed, by the same reason that men deny a *reward* to duty, (the faultiness being pardoned through Christ,) they would infer there is no *punishment* for sin ; for if God will not do good to the righteous, neither will he do evil to the wicked ; he becomes like the God of Epicurus, he does not trouble himself about us, nor about the merit or demerit of our actions. But David knew better : 'The Lord,' says he, 'plenteously rewardeth the proud doers ;' and 'verily there is a reward for the righteous, for there is a God that judgeth the earth ;' that sees matter of praise or dispraise, rewardableness, or worthiness of punishment, in all the actions of men." This is, Sir, all Mr. Baxter and Mr. W. mean by *merit* or *demerit* ; and if the Vindicator be wrong in thinking they are both in the right, please to remove the *veil* that conceals his *mistake*.

IV. As one of his correspondents desires him to explain himself a little more upon the article of the Minutes which respects *undervaluing ourselves* ; and as you probably place the arguments he has advanced upon that head among his "apparent mistakes," he takes, likewise, this opportunity of making some additional observations on that delicate subject.

How we can "esteem every man better than ourselves," and ourselves the "chief of sinners," or the "least of saints," seems not so much a calculation for the understanding, as for the lowly, contrite, and loving heart. It puzzles the former, but the latter at once makes it out. Nevertheless, the seeming contradiction may, perhaps, be reconciled to reason, by these reflections :—

1. If friendship brings the greatest monarch down from his throne, and makes him sit on the same couch with his favourites, may not brotherly love, much more powerful than natural friendship, may not humility, excited by the example of Christ washing his disciples' feet, may not a deep regard for that precept, "He that will be the greatest among you let him be the least of all," sink the true Christian to the dust, and make him lie in spirit at the feet of every one?

2. A well-bred person uncovers himself, bows, and declares, even to his inferiors, that he is their "most humble servant." This affected civility of the world is but an apish imitation of the genuine humility of the Church; and if those who customarily speak humble words without meaning may yet be honest men, how much more the saints, who have "truth written in their inward parts," and "speak out of the abundance of their" humble "hearts!"

3. He who walks in the light of divine love sees something of God's spiritual, moral, or natural image in all men, the worst not excepted; and at the sight, that which is merely creaturely in him (by a kind of spiritual instinct, found in all who are "born of the Spirit") directly bows to that which is of God in another. He imitates the Captain of a first-rate man-of-war, who, upon seeing the King or Queen coming up in a small boat, forgetting the enormous size of his ship, or considering it is the King's own ship, immediately strikes his colours; and the greater vessel, consistently with wisdom and truth, pays respect to the less.

4. The most eminent saint, having known more of the workings of corruption in his own breast, than he can possibly know of them in that of any other man, may, with great truth, (according to his present views and former feelings of the internal evil he has overcome,) call himself the chief of sinners.

5. Nor does he know, but, if the feeblest believers had had all his talents and graces, with all his opportunities of doing and receiving good, they would have made far superior advances in the Christian life; and in this view also, without hypocritical humility, he prefers the least saint to himself. Thus, although, according to the humble light of *others*, all true believers certainly "undervalue," yet, according to *their own* humble light, they make a true estimate of, themselves.

V. The Vindicator having thus solved a problem of godliness, which you have undoubtedly ranked among his "apparent mistakes," he takes the liberty of presenting you with a list of some of *your own* "apparent mistakes on this occasion."

1. In the very letter in which you recant your Circular Letter, you desire Mr. W. to "give up the fatal errors of the Minutes," though you have not yet *proved* they contain one; you still affirm, they appear to you "evidently subversive of the fundamentals of Christianity," that is, in plain English, still "dreadfully heretical;" and you produce a letter, which asserts also, without shadow of proof, that the "Minutes were given for the establishment of another foundation than that which is laid,"—that they are "repugnant to Scripture, the whole plan of man's salvation under the new covenant of grace, and also to the clear meaning of our Established Church, as well as to all other Protestant Churches."

2. You declare in your Narrative, that when you cast your eye over the Minutes, you are just where you were, and assure the public that "nothing inferior to an *attack upon the foundation of our hope*, through the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, could have been an object sufficient to engage you in its defence:" Thus, by continuing to insinuate such an *attack* was really made, you continue to wound Mr. W. in the tenderest part.

3. Although Mr. W., and fifty-three of his fellow-labourers, have let you quietly "secure the foundation," (which, by the by, had been only shaken in your own ideas, and was perfectly secured by these express words of the Minutes,—"Not by the merit of works," but by "believing in Christ,") yet, far from allowing them to *secure the superstructure* in their turn, which would be nothing but just, you begin already a contest with them about "our second justification by works in the day of judgment."

4. Instead of frankly acknowledging the rashness of your step, and the greatness of your mistake, with respect to the Minutes, you make a bad matter worse, by treating the Declaration as you have treated them; forcing upon it a dangerous sense, no less contrary to the Scriptures than to Mr. W.'s meaning, and the import of the words.

5. When you speak of the dreadful charges you have brought against the Minutes, you softly call them *misconstructions you MAY SEEM to have made of their meaning.* (Page 22, line 4.) Nor is your *acknowledgment* much stronger than your—*may seem*; at least it does not appear to many adequate to the hurt done by your Circular Letter to the practical Gospel of Christ, and the reputation of his eminent servant, thousands of whose friends you have grieved, offended, or stumbled; while you have confirmed thousands of his enemies in their hard thoughts of him, and in their unjust contempt of his ministry.

6. And, Lastly, far from candidly inquiring into the merit of the arguments advanced in the Vindication, you represent them as mere "metaphysical distinctions;" or cast, as a veil over them, a friendly, submissive *letter of condolence*, which was never intended for the use to which you have put it.

Therefore, the Vindicator,—who does not admire

a peace founded upon a *may seem* on your part, and on Mr. W.'s part upon a *Declaration*, to which you have already fixed a wrong unscriptural sense of your own,—takes this public method to inform you, he thinks his arguments in favour of Mr. W.'s anti-Crispian propositions, *rational*, *scriptural*, and *solid*; and once more he begs you would remove the veil you have hitherto “cast over all the apparent mistakes of his judgment on this occasion,” that he may see whether the *Antinomian* Gospel of Dr. Crisp is preferable to the *practical* Gospel which Mr. W. endeavours to restore to its primitive and scriptural lustre.

VI. Having thus finished my remarks upon the mistakes of your Narrative, I gladly take my leave of controversy for this time: Would to God it were for ever! I no more like it, than I do applying a caustic to the back of my friends: It is disagreeable to me, and painful to them; and, nevertheless, it must be done, when their health and mine are at stake.

I assure you, Sir, I do not love the warlike dress of the Vindicator, any more than David did the heavy armour of Saul. With gladness, therefore, I cast it aside, to throw myself at your feet, and protest to you, that, although I thought it my *duty* to write to you with the utmost *plainness*, *frankness*, and *honesty*, yet the design of doing it with *bitterness* never entered my heart. However, for every “bitter expression” that may have dropped from my sharp, vindicating pen, I ask your pardon; but it must be *in general*; for neither friends nor foes have yet *particularly* pointed out to me *one* such expression.

You have accepted of “*a letter of submission*” from me; let, I beseech you, a concluding *paragraph* of submission meet also with your favourable acceptance. You condescend, Reverend Sir, to call me your “learned friend.” *Learning* is an

accomplishment I never pretended to; but your *friendship* is an honour I shall always highly esteem, and do at this time value above my own brother's love. Appearances are a little against me: I feel I am a thorn in your flesh; but I am persuaded it is a *necessary* one, and this persuasion reconciles me to the thankless and disagreeable part I act.

If Ephraim must vex Judah, let Judah bear with Ephraim, till, happily tired of their contention, they feel the truth of Terence's words, *Aman-tium* (why not *credentium*?) *iræ amoris redintegratio est.*\* I can assure you, my dear Sir, without metaphysical distinction, I love and honour you, as truly as I dislike the rashness of your well-meant zeal. The motto I thought myself obliged to follow was, *e bello pax*;† but that which I delight in is, *in bello pax*;‡ may we make them harmonize till we learn war and polemic divinity no more!

My Vindication cost me tears of fear, lest I should have wounded you too deeply. That fear, I find, was groundless; but should you feel a little for the great truths and the great Minister I vindicate, these expostulations will wound me, and probably cost me tears again.

If, in the mean time, we offend our weak brethren, let us do something in order to lessen the offence till it be removed. Let us show them we make war without so much as shyness. Should you ever come to the next county, as you did last summer, honour me with a line, and I shall gladly wait upon you, and show you (if you permit me) the way to my pulpit, where I shall think myself highly favoured to see you "secure the foundation," and hear you enforce the doctrine of *justification*

\* The misunderstandings of lovers (why not of believers?) end in a renewal and increase of love.

† We make war in order to get peace.

‡ We enjoy peace in the midst of war.

*by faith*, which you fear we attack. And should I ever be within thirty miles of the city where you reside, I shall go to submit myself to you, and beg leave to assist you in reading Prayers for you, or giving the cup with you. Thus shall we convince the world, that controversy may be conscientiously carried on, without interruption of brotherly love ; and I shall have the peculiar pleasure of testifying to you in person, how sincerely I am, Hon. and Dear Sir,

Your submissive and obedient servant,

In the bond of a *practical* Gospel,

J. FLETCHER.

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### LETTER III.

HONOURED AND REV. SIR,

If I mistake not the workings of my heart, a concern for St. James's "pure and undefiled religion" excites me to take the pen once more, and may account for the readiness with which I have met you in the dangerous field of controversy. You may possibly think mere partiality to Mr. Wesley has inspired me with that boldness ; and others may be ready to say, as Eliab, "We know the pride and naughtiness of thy heart : Thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle." But may I not answer, with David, "Is there not a cause?"

Is it not highly necessary to make a stand against Antinomianism ? Is not that gigantic "man of sin" a more dangerous enemy to King Jesus, than the champion of the Philistines was to King Saul ? Has he not defied more than forty days the armies and arms, the people and truths, of the living God ? By audaciously daring the thousands in Israel, has he not made all the faint-hearted among them

ashamed to stand "in the whole armour of God," afraid to defend the important post of *duty*? And have not many left it already, openly running away, flying into the dens and caves of earthly-mindedness, "putting their light under a bushel," and even burying themselves alive in the noisome grave of profaneness?

Multitudes indeed still keep the field, still make an open profession of godliness. But how few of these "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ!" How many have already cast away "the shield of *Gospel* faith, the faith which works by love?" What numbers dread the *cross*, the heavenly standard they should steadily bear, or resolutely follow! While, in pompous speeches, they extol the cross of Jesus, how do they, upon the most frivolous pretence, refuse to "take up" their own! Did the massy staff of Goliah's spear seem more terrible to the frightened Israelites than the *daily cross* to those dastardly followers of the Crucified? What Boanerges can spirit them up, and lead them on "from conquering to conquer?" Who can even make them look the enemy in the face! Alas! "in their heart they are *already* gone back to Egypt. Their faces are *but half* Sion-ward." They give way,—they "draw back;" —O may it not be "to perdition!" May not the king of terrors overtake them in their retreat, and make them as great monuments of God's vengeance against cowardly soldiers, as Lot's wife was of his indignation against halting racers!

But setting allegory aside, permit me, Sir, to pour my fears into your bosom, and tell you with the utmost plainness my distressing thoughts of the religious world.

For some years I have suspected there is more imaginary than "unfeigned faith," in most of those who pass for believers. With a mixture of indignation and grief have I seen them carelessly follow

the stream of corrupt nature, against which they should have manfully wrestled ; and, by the most preposterous mistake, when they should have exclaimed against their *Antinomianism*,\* I have heard them cry out against “ the *legality*† of their wicked hearts ; which,” they said, “ still suggested they were to *do something* in order to salvation.” Glad was I, therefore, when I had attentively considered Mr. W.’s Minutes, to find they were levelled at the very errors which gave rise to an evil I had long lamented in secret, but had wanted courage to resist and attack.

I. This evil is *Antinomianism* ; that is, any kind of doctrinal or practical *opposition to God’s law*, which is the perfect rule of right, and the moral picture of the God of love, drawn in miniature by our Lord, in these two exquisite precepts, “ Thou shalt love God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.”

As “ the law is good, if a man use it lawfully,” so *legality* is excellent, if it be evangelical. The external respect shown by Pharisees to the law is but feigned and hypocritical legality. Pharisees are no more truly legal, than Antinomians are truly evangelical. “ Had ye believed Moses,” says Jesus to people of that stamp, “ ye would have believed me :” But in your heart you hate his law, as much as you do my Gospel.

We see no less Gospel in the preface of the Ten

\* The word *Antinomianism* is derived from two Greek words, *anti* and *nomos*, which signify “ against the law ;” and the word *legal* from the Latin *legalis*, which means “ agreeable to the law.”

† The *legality* contended for in these letters is not a *stumbling at Christ*, and a *going about to establish our own righteousness* by faithless works : This sin, which the Scripture calls *unbelief*, I would no more countenance than murder. The evangelical legality I want to see all in love with is a cleaving to Christ by faith which *works righteousness* ; a “ following him as he went about doing good ;” and a showing by St. James’s *works*, that we have St. Paul’s *faith*.

Commandments, "I am the Lord thy God," &c., than we do legality in the middle of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, "I say, whoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery in his heart." Nevertheless the latter "has in all things the pre-eminence" over the former; for if "the law," shortly prefaced by the Gospel, "came by Moses;" *grace*, the gracious, the full display of the Gospel, *and truth*, the true explanation and fulfilling of the law, "came by Jesus Christ."

This evangelical law should appear to us "sweeter than the honey-comb, and more precious than fine gold." We should continually spread the tables of our hearts before our heavenly Lawgiver, beseeching him to write it there with his own finger, the powerful Spirit of life and love: But, alas! God's commandments are disregarded; they are represented as the needless or impracticable sanctions of that superannuated Legalist, Moses; and if we express our veneration for them, we are looked upon as people who are always strangers to the Gospel, or are fallen into the Galatian state.

Not so David: He was so great an admirer of God's law, that he declares the godly man "doth meditate therein day and night;" he expresses his transcendent value for it, under the synonymous expressions of *law*, *words*, *statutes*, *testimonies*, *precepts*, and *commandments*, in almost every verse of the 119th Psalm. And he says of himself, "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day!"

St. Paul was as evangelically legal as David; for he knew the law is as much contained in the Gospel, as the tables of stone, on which the moral law was written, were contained in the ark. He therefore assured the Corinthians, that "though he had all faith," even that which is most uncommon, and performed the greatest wonders, it would

"profit him nothing," unless it was accompanied by "charity," unless it "worked by love," which is "the fulfilling of the law;" the excellency of faith arising from the excellent end it answers in producing and nourishing love.

Should it be objected, that St. Paul says to the Galatians, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God;" and to the Romans, "Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ :" I answer, In the Apostle's days, that expression, *the law*, frequently meant the whole Mosaic dispensation : And, in that sense, every believer is dead to it ; dead to all that Christ has not adopted. For, 1. He is dead to the *Levitical law*, "Christ having abolished in himself the law of ordinances : Touch not, taste not, handle not." 2. He is dead to the *ceremonial law*, which was only "a shadow of good things to come ;" a typical representation of Christ and the blessings flowing from his sacrifice. 3. He is dead to the *curse* attending his past violations of the *moral law* ; for "Christ hath delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." And, Lastly, he is dead to the hopes of recommending himself to God, by the *merit* of his obedience to the moral law ; for in point of *merit*, he "is determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified."

To make St. Paul mean more than this, is, 1. To make him maintain that no believer can sin : For if "sin is the transgression of the law," and "the law is dead and buried," it is plain, no believer can sin, as nobody can transgress a law which is abolished ; for "where no law is, there is no transgression." 2. It is to make him contradict St. James, who exhorts us to "fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And, 3. It is to make him contradict himself ; for he charges the Galatians "by love to serve one another ; all the law being fulfilled in one

word, even in this : 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself : ' And he assures the Hebrews, that under the new covenant, believers, far from being "without God's laws, have them written in their hearts ; God himself placing them in their minds." We cannot, therefore, with any shadow of justice, put Dr. Crisp's coat upon the Apostle, and press him into the service of the Antinomians.

And did our Lord side with Antinomians ? Just the reverse. Far from repealing the two above-mentioned royal precepts, he asserts, that "on them hang all the law and the Prophets ; " and had the four Gospels been then written, he would, no doubt, have represented them as subservient to the establishing of the law, as he did the book of Isaiah, the evangelical Prophet. Such high thoughts had he of the law, that when a lawyer expressed his veneration for it, by declaring that the "love of God and our neighbour was more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices ; " Jesus, seeing that he had answered discreetly, said unto him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

The Gospel itself terminates in the fulfilling of the commandments : for as the curse of the law, like the scourge of a severe school-master, drives, so the Gospel, like a loving guide, brings us to Christ, the great law-fulfiller, in whom we find inexhaustible treasures of pardon and power : Of pardon for past breaches of the law, and of power for present obedience to it. Nor are we sooner come to him, than he magnifies the law by his precepts, as he formerly did by his obedience unto death : "If ye love me," says he, "keep my commandments : This is his commandment, that we should love one another ; and he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

Again : The Gospel displays Jesus's dying love, that "by believing" it "we may" love him : That is, "have everlasting life ; " the life of love which

*abideth* when the life of faith is no more. Hence St. John sums up Christianity in these words, “We love him because he first loved us!” And what is it to love Jesus, but to fulfil the whole law at once; to love God and man, the Creator and the creature, united in one divinely-human person?

Did the Son of God “magnify the law,” that we might vilify it? Did he “make it honourable,” that we might make it contemptible? Did he “come to fulfil it,” that we might be discharged from fulfilling it according to our capacity? that is, discharged from loving God and our neighbour? discharged from the employment and joys of heaven? No: “the Word was” never “made flesh” for this dreadful end. None but Satan could have become incarnate to go upon such an infernal errand as this! Standing, therefore, upon the rock of evangelical truth, we ask, with St. Paul, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Nay, we establish the law.” We point sinners to that Saviour, in and from whom they may continually have the law-fulfilling power; “that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Such are the glorious and delightful views which the Scriptures give us of the law, disarmed of its curse in Christ: The law of holy, humble love, so strongly enforced in the discourses, and sweetly exemplified in the life and death, of the “Prophet like unto Moses!” So amiable, so precious is the book of the law, when delivered to us by Jesus, sprinkled with his atoning blood, and explained by his loving Spirit! And so true is St. Paul’s assertion, “We are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.”

Instead, then, of dressing up the law as a scarecrow, let us, in our degree, “magnify it, and make it honourable,” as did our Lord. Instead of repre-

senting it as "an intolerable yoke of bondage," let us call it, with St. Paul, "the law of Christ," and, with St. James, "the perfect law of liberty." And let every true believer say, with David, "I love thy commandments above gold and precious stones: I shall always keep thy law; yea, for ever and ever: I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts."

But, alas! how few give us these evangelical views of the Law, and practical views of the Gospel! How many intimate Christ has "fulfilled all righteousness," that we might be the children of God with hearts "full of unrighteousness!" If some insist upon our "fulfilling all righteousness" also, is it not chiefly when they want to draw us into their peculiarities, and *dip* us into their narrow denomination? And what numbers, under the fair pretence that they "have a living law written in their hearts," insinuate "there is no need of preaching the law" to them, either to show them more of God's purity, endear the atoning blood, regulate their conduct, or convince them of the necessity of *perfecting holiness!*

But supposing these objectors love, as they say, "the law written in their inward parts," (which the actions and tempers of some make rather doubtful,) is the writing so "perfectly finished," that no one stroke need to be added to it? Is not the law an important part of "the work of righteousness?" And could not the Holy Ghost retouch the writing, or deepen the engraving, by the ministry of "the word of righteousness?" Again: If the internal teachings of the Holy Spirit supersede the letter of the *Law*, must they not, by the same reason, supersede the letter of the *Gospel?* Is there any more need of preaching the *Gospel* than the *Law* to believers? Or have they not the *Gospel* "written in their hearts," as well as the *Law*?

At what amazing heights of uns scriptural perfe-  
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tion must our objectors suppose themselves to have arrived ! What palpable errors do they run into, that they may have the honour of passing for evangelical ! And who will envy them the glory of countenancing the Antinomian delusion, by standing in direct opposition to Christ, who thus decides the controversy?—“ Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled,” either in what it requires or denounces ; for the law is “ fulfilled ” not only when its precepts are obeyed, but when rewards are given to the observers, and punishments inflicted upon the violators, of it. “ Whosoever, therefore, shall *do* my commandments, and *teach* them, shall be great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Do not imagine, Reverend Sir, I thus cry up God’s law, to drown the late cries of *Heresy* and *Apostasy*. I appeal to matter of fact, and your own observations. Consider the religious world, and say, if *Antinomianism* is not, in general, a motto better adapted to the state of professing congregations, societies, families, and individuals, than “ Holiness unto the Lord,”—the inscription that should be even upon our “ horses’ bells.”

II. Begin with *congregations* ; and cast first your eyes upon the *hearers*. In general they have curious “ itching ears,” and “ will not endure sound doctrine.” Many of them are armed with “ the breast-plate of ” a “ righteousness ” which they have vainly\* imputed to themselves : They have on the

\* Our imputation of Christ’s righteousness to ourselves is a trick of our Antinomian hearts, and is a dreadful delusion : But God’s imputing of Christ’s righteousness to true believers is a most blessed reality, for which we cannot too much contend. “ He speaks the word, and it is done ; ” his imputation is not an *idea*, but a *fact* ; wherever it takes place, “ Jehovah our righteousness,” or “ Christ the righteous, dwells in the heart by faith.”

showy "helmet of" a presumptuous "hope," and hold fast the impenetrable shield of strong prejudice. With these they "quench the fiery darts of" convincing truth, and stand undaunted under volleys of reproof.

They say, they "will have nothing but Christ :" And who could blame them, if they would have Christ in all his offices ? Christ with all his parables and sermons, cautions and precepts, reproofs and expostulations, exhortations and threatenings ? Christ preaching to the multitudes upon a mountain, as well as honourably teaching in the temple ? Christ fasting in the wilderness, or praying in Gethsemane, as well as Christ making the multitudes sit down upon the grass to receive loaves and fishes, or promising thrones to his disciples ? Christ constraining them to get into a ship, and toil in rowing all night with a contrary wind ; as well as Christ coming in the morning, and causing the ship to be immediately at the land whither they went ? Christ upon Mount Calvary, as well as Christ upon Mount Tabor ? In a word : Who would find fault with them, if they would have Christ with his poverty and self-denial, his reproach and cross, his Spirit and graces, his Prophets and Apostles, his plain apparel and mean followers ?

But, alas ! it is not so. They will have *what* they please of Christ, and that too *as they please*. If he come accompanied by legal Moses and honest

I wish that, with respect to *imputed righteousness*, we paid more regard to the late Mr. Hart's sentiments. This experienced and sound Calvinist, in the account of his conversion prefixed to his Hymns, says, with great truth, "As much as Lazarus coming out of the grave, and feeling himself restored to life, differed from those who only saw the miracle, or believed the fact told them ; so great is the difference between a soul's *real* coming to Christ out of himself, and having the righteousness of Christ imputed to him by the precious faith of God's elect ; and a man's bare believing the doctrine of imputed righteousness, because he sees it contained in the Scripture, or assenting to the truth of it when proposed to his understanding by others."

Elijah, who talk of the crucifixion of the body and decease of the flesh, they can do very well without him. If he preach *free grace, free will, faithfulness, or heavenly-mindedness*, some turn to the right, some wheel about to the left, others go directly back ; and all agree to say or think, “ This is an hard saying ; who can hear it ? ”

They admire him in one chapter, and know not what to make of him in another. Some of his words they extol to the sky, and others they seem to be ashamed of. If he assert his authority as a Lawgiver, they are as ready to treat him with as little ceremony as they do Moses. If he say, “ Keep my commandments : I am a King ; ” like the Jews of old, they rise against the awful declaration ; or they *crown him* as a *Surety*, the better to *set him at nought* as a *Monarch*. And if he add, to his Ministers, “ I am the Prophet that was to come ; go in my name, and teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; ” they complain, “ This is the *Law* ; give us the *Gospel* ; we can relish nothing but the *Gospel*.”

They have no idea of “ eating the paschal lamb ” whole, “ his head with his legs, and the purtenance thereof ; ” nor do they take care of “ not breaking his bones ; ” they do not like him “ roast with fire ” neither ; but “ raw, or sodden with water ” out of their own “ broken cisterns.” If you present him to them as the type of “ the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” and maketh an end of it ; their hearts heave, they say, “ ‘ Pray have me excused ’ from thus feeding upon him : ” And though it is said, “ Ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning, you shall eat it in haste ; ” they postpone ; they beg leave to keep it till the article of death : And if, in the mean time, you talk to them of “ bitter herbs,” they marvel at your Jewish, legal taste, and complain that you spoil the gospel feast.

They do not consider we must "give every one his portion of meat," or proper medicine, "in due season;" and that sweet things are not always wholesome. They forget we must "leave all" Antinomian refinements to "follow Christ," who sometimes says to decent Pharisees, "How can you escape the damnation of hell?" and to a beloved disciple that shuns the cross, "Satan, thou savourest not the things of God, but the things of men." They will have nothing but the atonement. Nor do they choose to remember that St. Paul, who "did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God," preached Christ to Felix, by reasoning of "temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come."

Hence it is that some Preachers must choose comfortable subjects to please their hearers; just as those who make an entertainment for nice persons, are obliged to study what will suit their difficult taste. A multitude of important scriptures may be produced, on which no Minister, who is unwilling to lose his reputation as "an Evangelical Preacher," must dare to speak in some pulpits, unless it be to explain away or enervate their meaning. Take some instances:—

The good old Calvinists (Archbishop Leighton for one) questioned whether a man was truly converted who did not sincerely "go on to perfection," and heartily endeavour to "perfect holiness in the fear of God;" but now, if we only quote such passages with an emphasis, and enforce their meaning with some degree of earnestness, the truth of our conversion is suspected: We even pass for enemies to Christ's righteousness.

If we had courage to handle such scriptures as these:—"To do good and to distribute forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased.—Show me thy faith by thy works.—Was not Rahab justified by works?—By works was Abraham's faith

made perfect," &c.,—the bare giving out of our text prejudices our Antinomian hearers against us, and robs us of their candid attention; unless they expect a Charity-sermon; for on such an occasion they will yet allow us, at the close of our discourse, to speak honourably of good works: Just as those who run to the opposite extreme, will yet, on some particular days, such as Christmas and Good-Friday, permit us to make honourable mention of Jesus Christ.

The evil would be tolerable, if we were only obliged to select smooth texts in order to gratify an Antinomian audience; but, alas! it is grown so desperate, that unless we adulterate "the sincere milk of the word," many reject it as poison. It is a doubt whether we could preach in some celebrated pulpits on "the good man," who is "merciful and lendeth," who hath "dispersed abroad and given to the poor," and whose "righteousness remaineth for ever;"—or on "breaking off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by showing mercy to the poor;"—or on "the righteousness which exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees;"—or on "the robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb," without giving general disgust; unless to keep in the good grace of our Nicolaitan hearers, we were to dissent from all sober commentators, and offer the greatest violence to the context, our own conscience, and common sense, by saying that the righteousness and robes mentioned in those passages, are Christ's *imputed*, and not our *performed*, obedience.

How few of our evangelical congregations would bear from the pulpit an honest explanation of what they allow us to read in the desk! We may open our Service by saying, that "when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive;" but woe to us, if we handle the scrip-

ture in the pulpit, unless we wrest it by representing Christ as "the wicked man who does that which is lawful and right, to save our souls alive," without any of our *doings*.

Were we to preach upon these words of our Lord, "This do and thou shalt live;" (Luke x. 25;) the sense of which is fixed by the 37th verse, "Go, and do thou likewise;" or only to handle, without deceit, those common words of the Lord's Prayer, confirmed by a plain parable, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;" our reputation as Protestants would be in as much danger from the bulk of some congregations, as our persons from the fire of a whole regiment in the day of battle. How would such a discourse, and the poor blind man that preached it, be privately exclaimed against, or publicly\* exposed in a Magazine presented to the world under the sacred name of *Gospel*!

In short, whoever has courage enough to preach as St. Paul did at Athens, at Lystra, and before Felix, rebuking sin without respect of persons; whoever will imitate St. Peter, and exhort all his hearers "to save themselves from this perverse generation," assuring them that the "promise of the Holy Spirit is unto them and their children," must expect to be looked upon as unsound, if not as an enemy of free grace, and a setter forth of Pelagian or Popish doctrines. Moderate Calvinists themselves must run the gauntlet, if they preach free grace as St. Peter did. A pious Clergyman, noted for his strong attachment to what some call the doctrines of grace, was, to my knowledge, highly blamed by one part of his auditory, for having preached to the other repentance towards God, and exhorted them to call on him for mercy; and I remember he just saved his sinking reputation as

\* This was actually the case some months ago, with respect to a Sermon preached by Mr. Wesley.

a sound Divine, by pleading, that two Apostles exhorted even Simon Magus to “repent of his wickedness, and pray to God, if, perhaps, the thought of his heart might be forgiven him.”

When such professors will not bear the plainest truth, from Ministers whose sentiments agree with theirs; how will they rise against deeper truths advanced by those who are of a different opinion! Some will even lose all decency. Observing, in preaching last summer, one of them remarkably busy in disturbing all around him, when the service was over I went up to him, and inquired into the cause of the dissatisfaction he had so indecently expressed. “I am not afraid to tell it to your face,” said he: “I do not like your doctrine; you are a free-willer.” “If I have spoken evil,” replied I, “bear witness of the evil.” He paused a while, and then charged me with praying before the sermon, as if all might be saved. “That is false doctrine,” added he; “and if Christ himself came down from heaven to preach it, I would not believe him.”

I wondered, at first, at the positiveness of my rigid objector; but, upon second thoughts, I thought him modest, in comparison of numbers of professors, who see that Christ actually came down from heaven, and preached the doctrine of perfection in his Sermon upon the Mount, and yet will face us down that it is an Anti-Christian doctrine.

This Antinomian cavilling of hearers against preachers is deplorable; and the effects of it will be dreadful. If the Lord do not put a stop to this growing evil, we shall soon see everywhere, what we see in too many places, self-conceited, unhumbled men, rising against the truths and Ministers of God;—men who *are not meek doers of the law, but insolent judges*, preposterously trying that law by which they shall soon be tried;—men, who, instead of sitting as criminals before all the messengers of their Judge, with arrogance invade the

Judge's tribunal, and arraign even his venerable ambassadors;—men who should *fall on their faces before all*, and *give glory to God*, by *confessing that he is with his Ministers*, of every denomination, *of a truth*: But who, far from doing it, boldly condemn the word that condemns them; snatch the two-edged sword from the mouth of every faithful messenger, blunt the edge of it, and audaciously thrust at him in their turn;—men, who, when they see a servant of God in their pulpit, suppose he stands at their bar; try him with as much insolence as Corah, Dathan, and Abiram tried Moses; cast him with less kindness than Pilate did Jesus; force a fool's coat of their own making upon him; and then, from *the seat of the scornful*, pronounce the decisive sentence: “He is legal, dark, blind, unconverted; an enemy to free grace:—He is a rank Papist, a Jesuit, a false Prophet, or a wolf in sheep's clothing.”

III. But whence springs this almost general Antinomianism of our congregations? Shall I conceal the sore because it festers in my own breast? Shall I be partial? No; in the name of Him who is “no respecter of persons,” I will confess my sin, and that of many of my brethren. Though I am the least, and (I write it with tears of shame) the most unworthy of them all, I will follow the dictates of my conscience, and use the authority of a Minister of Christ. If Balaam, a *false Prophet*, took in good part the reproof of his ass, I should wrong my honoured brethren and fathers, the true Prophets of the Lord, if I feared their resenting some well-meant reproofs, which I first levelled at myself, and for which I heartily wish there was no occasion.

Is not the Antinomianism of hearers fomented by that of Preachers? Does it not become us to take the greatest part of the blame upon ourselves, according to the old adage, “Like Priest, like peo-

ple?" Is it surprising that some of us should have an Antinomian audience? Do we not make or keep it so? When did we preach such a practical sermon as that of our Lord on the mount, or write such close letters as the Epistles of St. John? Alas! I doubt it is but seldom. Not living so near to God ourselves as we should, we are afraid to come near to the consciences of our people. The Jews said to our Lord, "In so saying thou reproachest us;" but now the case is altered; and our auditors might say to many of us, "In so saying you would reproach yourselves."

Some prefer popularity to plain dealing. We love to see a crowd of worldly-minded hearers, rather than "a little flock of peculiar people zealous of good works." We dare not shake our congregations to purpose, lest our *five thousand* should, in three years' time, be reduced to *an hundred and twenty*.

Luther's advice to Melanethon, *Scandaliza fortiter*, "So preach that those who do not fall out with their sins, may fall out with thee," is more and more unfashionable. Under pretence of drawing our hearers by love, some of us softly rock the cradle of carnal security in which they sleep. For "fear of grieving the dear children of God," we let *buyers and sellers, sheep and oxen*, yea, goats and lions, fill the temple undisturbed. And because "the bread must not be kept from the hungry children," we let those who are wanton make shameful waste of it, and even allow *dogs* which we should *beware of*, and noisy parrots that can speak *shibboleth*, to do the same. We forget that God's children are *led by his Spirit*, who is the *Comforter* himself; that they are all afraid of being deceived, all *zealous for the Lord of Hosts*; and therefore prefer a Preacher who "searches Jerusalem with candles," and cannot suffer God's house to be *made a den of thieves*, to a workman who *white-*

washes the noisome sepulchres he should open, and daubs over with untempered mortar the bulging walls he should demolish.

The old Puritans strongly insisted upon *personal holiness*, and the first Methodists upon the *new birth*; but these doctrines seem to grow out of date. The Gospel is cast into another mould. People, it seems, may now be *in Christ* without being *new creatures*; or *new creatures* without casting *old things* away. They may be God's children without God's image; and *born of the Spirit*, without *the fruits of the Spirit*. If our unregenerate hearers get orthodox ideas about the way of salvation in their heads, evangelical phrases concerning Jesus's love in their mouths, and a warm zeal for our party and favourite forms in their hearts, without any more ado we help them to rank themselves among the children of God. But, alas! this self-adoption into the family of Christ will no more pass in heaven, than self-imputation of Christ's righteousness. The work of the Spirit will stand there, and that alone. Again:

Some of us often give our congregations particular accounts of the covenant between the persons of the blessed Trinity, and speak of it as confidently as if the King of kings had admitted us members of his Privy Council; but how seldom do we do justice to the Scriptures where the covenant is mentioned in a *practical* manner! How rarely do the Ministers who are fond of preaching upon the covenant between God and David, dwell upon such Scriptures as these!—“ Because they continued not in my covenant, I regarded them not; because they have transgressed the law, changed the ordinances, and broken the everlasting covenant, therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.—I say to the wicked, What

hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth? —They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law ;” they would not be evangelically legal, “ therefore a fire was kindled in Jacob, the wrath of God came upon them, he slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen,” the elect “ of Israel !”

We frequently keep back from our hearers the very portions that honest Nathian, or blunt John the Baptist, would have particularly enforced. The taste of many is perverted, they “ loathe the manna of the word,” not because it is *light*, but *heavy* food: They must have “ savoury meat, such as their soul loveth ;” and we “ *hunt* for venison,” we minister to their spiritual luxury, and feast with them on our own doctrinal refinements. Hence “ many are weak and sickly among us.” Some, that might be “ fat and well-loving, cry out, *My leanness! My leanness!*” and “ many sleep” in a spiritual grave, the easy prey of corruption and sin.

How few Calebs, how few Joshuas, are found among the many spies who bring a report of the good land! The cry is seldom, “ Let us go up and possess it,” unless the good land be the map of the Gospel drawn by Dr. Crisp. On the contrary, the difficulties attending the noble conquest are magnified to the highest degree: “ The sons of Anak are tall and strong, and their cities are fenced up to heaven.” “ All our corruptions are gigantic; the castle where they dwell shall always remain a den of thieves ; it is an impregnable citadel, strongly garrisoned by Apollyon’s forces ; we shall never love God here with all our souls, we shall always have desperately wicked hearts.”

How few of our celebrated pulpits are there, where more has not been said, *at times*, for sin than against it! With what an air of positiveness and assurance has that Barabbas, that murderer of Christ and souls, been pleaded for ! “ It will

humble us, make us watchful, stir up our diligence, quicken our graces, endear Christ," &c. That is, in plain English, pride will beget humility, sloth will spur us on to diligence, rust will brighten our armour; and unbelief, the very soul of every sinful temper, is to do the work of faith! Sin must not only be always lurking about the walls and gates of the town of Man's-soul, (if I may once more allude to Bunyan's *Holy War*,) but it shall dwell in it, in the King's palace, "in the inner chamber," the inmost recesses of the heart; there is no turning it out. Jesus, who cleansed the lepers with a word or a touch, cannot, with all the force of his Spirit and virtue of his blood, expel this leprosy; it is too inveterate. Death, that foul monster, the offspring of sin, shall have the important honour of killing his father. He, he alone is to give the great, the last, the decisive blow. This is confidently asserted by those who cry, "Nothing but Christ!" They allow him to lop off the branches; but death, the great saviour death, is to destroy the root of sin. In the mean time, "the temple of God shall have agreement with idols," and "Christ concord with Belial: 'The Lamb' of God shall 'lie down with the roaring lion' in our hearts.

Nor does the preaching of this internal slavery, this bondage of spiritual corruption, shock our hearers. No: This mixture of light and darkness passes for Gospel in our days. And what is more astonishing still, by making much ado about "finished salvation," we can even put it off as "the only pure, genuine, and comfortable Gospel;" while the smoothness of our doctrine will atone for our most glaring inconsistencies.

We have so whetted the Antinomian appetite of our hearers, that they swallow down almost anything. We may tell them, St. Paul was, at one and the same time, "carnal, sold under sin," crying, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

and triumphing that he did “not walk after the flesh, but after the spirit, rejoicing in the testimony of a good conscience,” and glorying that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus had made him free from the law of sin and death !” This suits their experience ; therefore they readily take our word, and it passes for the word of God. It is a mercy that we have not yet attempted to prove by the same argument, that lying and cursing are quite consistent with apostolic faith ; for St. Paul speaks of his “lie,” and St. James says, “With our tongues curse we men.”

We may make them believe, that though adultery and murder are damning sins in poor blind Turks and Heathens, yet they are only the spots of God’s children in enlightened Jews and favoured Christians :—That God is the most partial of all judges, some being accursed to the pit of hell for breaking the law in the most trifling points ; while others, who actually break it in the most flagrant instances, are richly “blessed with all heavenly benedictions :”—And that while God beholds “no iniquity in Jacob, no perverseness in Israel,” he sees nothing but odious sins in Ishmael, and devilish wickedness in Esau : Although the Lord assures us, “the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him,” and that, “though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished,” were he as great in Jacob as Corah, and as famous as Zimri in Israel.

We may tell our hearers one hour, that “the love of Christ *sweetly constrains*” all believers to walk, yea, to “run the way of God’s commandments,” and they cannot help obeying its forcible dictates : And we may persuade them the next hour, that, “how to perform what is good they find not ;” that they fall continually into sin ; “for that which they do they allow not, and what they would, that do they not ; but what they hate, that

do they." And that these inconsistencies may not shock their common sense, or alarm their consciences, we again touch the sweet-sounding string of *finished salvation*: We intimate we have the key of evangelical knowledge, reflect on those who expect deliverance from sin in this life, and "build up" our congregations in a most comfortable, I wish I could say, "most holy, faith."

In short, we have so used our people to strange doctrines, and preposterous assertions, that if we were to intimate, God himself sets us a pattern of Antinomianism, by disregarding his own most holy and lovely law which inculcates perfect love;—if we were even to hint that he bears a secret grudge, or an immortal enmity to those very souls whom he commands us to "love as Christ has loved us;" that he feeds them only for the great day of slaughter, and has determined (so inveterate is his hatred!) "before the foundation of the world," to "fit" them as "vessels of wrath," that he might eternally fill them with his fiery vengeance, merely to show what a great and sovereign God he is;—I doubt not whether some would not be highly pleased, and say we had "preached a sound and sweet discourse." This would probably be the case if we addressed them in such a manner, as to make them believe they are elect; not indeed of those ancient, legal, and wrestling "elect, who cry to God day and night to be avenged of their spiritual adversary;" but of those modern, indolent elect, who have found out a short way to heaven, and maintain, "we are absolutely to do nothing in order to salvation."

With joy I confess, however, that glorious and rousing truths are frequently delivered in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. But, alas!, the blow is seldom followed. You have seen fond mothers violently correcting their children one instant, and the next dandling them upon

their knees ; and by foolishly kissing away their tears, spoiling the correction they had given. Just so it is with several of us : We preach a close discourse, and seem determined to drive the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Our Antinomian hearers begin to awake and look about them : Some are even ready to cry out, “ Men and brethren, what shall we do ? ” But, alas ! , we sound a retreat when we should shout for a second battle : By an unaccountable weakness, before we conclude, we soothe them up, and make a way for their escape ; or, which is not much better, the next time we preach, by setting up Dr. Crisp’s doctrine as much as ever, we industriously repair the breach we had made in the Antinomian Babel.

And suppose some of us preach against Antinomianism, is not our practice contrary to our preaching ? We are under a dangerous mistake, if we think ourselves clear from Antinomianism, merely because we thunder against Antinomian principles : For as some, who zealously maintain such principles, by the happiest inconsistency in the world, pay nevertheless, in their practice, a proper regard to the law they revile ; so not a few, who profess the deepest respect for it, are so unhappily inconsistent, as to transgress it without ceremony. The God of holiness says, “ Go and work in my vineyard ; ” the inconsistent Antinomian answers, “ I will not be bound by any law ; I scorn the ties of duty.” But, nevertheless, “ he repents and goes.” The inconsistent Legalist replies, “ It is my bounden duty to obey ; *I go, Lord :* ” Nevertheless, he does not go. Which of the two is the greater Antinomian ? The latter, no doubt : His practical Antinomianism is much more odious to God and man, than the speculative error in the former.

The Lord God help us to avoid both ! Whether the hellish wolf comes barefaced, or “ in sheep’s

clothing ;" or, what is a still more dangerous disguise, in Lamb's clothing ; in the clothes of the Shepherd, covered from head to foot with a righteousness which he had imputed to himself, and sings the Syren-song of "finished salvation."

IV. I shall close these reflections upon the Antinomianism of Preachers, by presenting you with sketches of two very opposite ways of preaching. The first is an extract from Bishop Hopkins's twenty-fourth Sermon, entitled, *Practical Christianity*, upon those words of St. Paul, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," &c. This testimony will weigh so much the more with you, as he was a sound *Calvinist*, and a truly converted man.

"To work out our salvation," says the godly Prelate, "is to persevere in the ways of obedience, until, through them, that salvation which is begun here on earth be perfected in heaven. This work implies three things: 1. Pains and labour. Salvation is that which must be wrought out; it is that which will make the soul pant and breathe, yea, run down with sweat to obtain it. 2. It implies constancy and diligence. A Christian that would 'work out his salvation,' must be always employed about it. It is a web into which we must weave the whole thread of our lives. That man who works at salvation only by some passionate fits, and then within a while undoes it all again by foul apostasy, and notorious sins, will never work salvation *out*. 3. It promises success; though it be hard work, it shall not be long work; continue working, it shall be wrought out; what before was your work shall be your reward; and this salvation that was so painful in working, shall be most blessed in the enjoyment.

"Say not, 'We have no strength to work with.' What God commands us to do, he will assist us in doing. We are impotent, but God is omnipotent:

Work therefore, for this omnipotent God ‘works in you both to will and to do.’

“The proposition I shall lay down from the text is this: ‘That it is the duty of every true Christian to work out his salvation with fear and trembling; or, that every Christian, yea, every man, ought to work for his living, even for an eternal life.’ To mention places for the truth of this, were to transcribe the Bible. We can no where open this blessed Book, but we find this truth proved to us, either directly or by consequence. And yet it is strange in these days to see how dubiously some men, who would be thought admirers of free grace, speak of obedience and working, as if they were the badge of a legal spirit. O, it is a soft and easy doctrine to bid men sit still and believe, as if God would translate them to heaven upon their couches. Is it possible that these notions should be dispersed and entertained? Yes, because it has always been the devil’s policy to vent those doctrines that indulge the flesh, under the patronage of free grace and Gospel attainments!

“Wherefore is it that we are commanded to ‘strive that we may enter in at the strait gate? so to run that we may obtain? so to *wrestle*, that we may be able to stand? so to fight that we may lay hold on eternal life?’ Can you strive and run, and wrestle and fight, and all this by doing nothing? If God would save you without working, why has he given you grace, an operative principle, that you might work? He might as well save you without grace, as without works: For that is not grace that does not put forth itself in working. God, rather than we shall not work, will set us at work. He gives and promises assistance, only that we might work out our own salvation. ‘We are not sufficient to think any thing?’ What then? Must we therefore sit still?

No, says the Apostle, for God who finds us employment, will also find us strength : ‘ Our sufficiency is of God.’

“ Wherefore is it that men are justly damned ? Is it not because they will not do what they are able to do ? And whence have they this ability ? Is it not from the grace of God’s Spirit ? What is it that men expect ? Must God drive them to heaven by force and violence, whether they will or no ?

“ If man will, he may work out his salvation. I speak not this to assert the power of man to work out salvation, without the aid of special grace to incline his will. Where there is special grace given to make the will willing to convert, there is nothing more required to make him able, because conversion chiefly consists in the act of the will itself ; only to make him willing, is required special grace ; which they that favour the undue liberty of the will deny. Our impotency lies in the stubbornness of our will. The greatest sinner may work out his own salvation if he will. If he be but willing, he has that already that may make him able. God puts no new powers in the soul when he converts it !

“ Are there any so desperately profane as not to have prayed to God in their whole life ? Why now, to what end have you prayed ? Was it not for salvation ? And did you work for salvation, and at the same time believe that you could not work ? Thou art inexcusable, O man, whoever thou art, that wilt not work ; it is in vain to plead, thou wantest power ! God will confute thee out of thy own mouth.”

“ Would a master, when he commands his servant to work, take this as a sufficient excuse for his sloth and idleness, that he has no power to work and act till God acts and moves him ? Why this is a truth, and it may as well be objected by your

servants to you, as by you unto God. Though it is impossible that men should stir without God's concurrence, yet this hinders not their endeavour ; no, nor is it any matter of discouragement to them. They put these things to the trial. Now why should we not do so in spirituals as well as in temporals ? Are they not of greater concernment ? It is not inability but wilful sloth that destroys men. Sinners, wherefore will ye perish ? Why will you sleep away your souls into hell ? Is it more painful for you to work than to be damned ? Endeavour therefore to do what you can ; labour and sweat at salvation's work, rather than fail of it for a wilful neglect. ‘ How shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation ? ’

“ OBJECTION.—‘ Thus to press men to working is derogatory to Christ's merits, by which alone we are saved, and not by our works. Christ has done all for us, and wrought out our salvation by himself. Shall we piece out his work by our obedience, when all we have now to do is to believe on him ? ’

“ ANSWER.—There is the sweetest harmony between the merits of Christ, and our *working out of our salvation*. To make it evident, I shall show what Christ has done for us, and what he expects we should do for ourselves. He has merited grace, and purchased eternal happiness. And why did Christ *merit* grace ? Was it not that we might *act* it in obedience ? If he merited grace that we might obey, is it sense to object that our obedience is derogatory to his merit ? If one end of his doing all that he did for us was to enable us to do for ourselves ; will any man say, Now I am bound to do nothing, because Christ has done all ? How lost are such men both to reason and religion, who undertake so to argue ! No ; salvation was purchased and grace procured, that by the acting and exercise of that grace, we might attain to that sal-

vation. It is not by way of merit or purchase, that we exhort men to work out their salvation. Those are guilty of practical blasphemy against the priestly office of Christ, who think to merit it by their own works.

" As Christ has done two things for us, so he requires two things from us. 1. That we should put forth all the strength of nature in labouring after grace: And, 2. That we should put forth the power of grace in labouring for the salvation purchased for us. 1. Let every sinner know it is his work to repent and return, that he may live. You cannot sit down and say, What need is there of my working? Christ has already done all my work for me to my hands. No, Christ has done his own work, the work of a Saviour and a Surety; but he never did the work of a sinner.

" If Christ by meriting grace had bestowed it upon thee, and wrought it in thee, then indeed no more would be required of thee to become holy, but to cast back a lazy look at the purchase of Jesus Christ: Then thy sloth would have some pretence not to labour. But this will not do. Our Saviour commands all men to 'seek first the kingdom of God'; and the Apostle exhorts Simon Magus to pray. Do not therefore cheat your own souls into perdition by lazy notions about Christ's merits. If you sit still expecting till the meriting grace of Christ drop down into your souls, and change your hearts, truly, it may be, before that time, you yourselves may drop down into hell with your old unchanged hearts!

" 2. Christ expects that those who have grace, should put forth the utmost power thereof in labouring after the salvation he has purchased for them. He has merited salvation for them, but it is to be obtained by their own labour and industry. Is not what Christ has done sufficient? Must he repent, believe, and obey for them? This is not

to make him a Saviour, but a drudge. He has done what was fit for a Mediator to do. He now requires of us what is meet for sinners to do; that is, to repent, &c. He now bids you ‘wash and be clean.’ Would you have the greatest Prophet come and strike off your leprosy, and you do nothing towards the cure? The way to heaven is made possible; but if you do not walk in the way that leads to it, you may still be as far from heaven as ever. Though Christ’s bearing the punishment of the law by death does exempt us from suffering, yet his obeying of the law does not excuse our obedience to the law. Nor is our obedience derogatory to Christ’s, because it proceeds from other grounds than Christ’s did. He obeyed the law as a covenant of works, we only as a rule of righteousness.

“To conclude upon this point: So work with that earnestness, constancy, and unweariedness in well-doing, as if thy works alone were able to justify and save thee: And so absolutely depend and rely upon the merits of Christ, for justification and salvation, as if thou never hadst performed one act of obedience in all thy life. This is the right Gospel frame of obedience, so to work, as if we were only to be saved by our own merits; and withal so to rest on the merits of Christ, as if we had never wrought any thing. It is a difficult thing to give each of these its due in our practice. When we work we are too apt to neglect Christ; and when we rely on Christ, we are too apt to neglect working. But that Christian has got the right notion of obedience who can mingle these two together; who can with one hand *work the works of God*, and yet at the same time lay fast hold on the merits of Jesus Christ. Let this Antinomian system be for ever rooted out of the minds of men, that our working is derogatory to Christ’s work. Never more think he has done all your work for

you, but labour for that salvation which he has purchased and merited. Could ever such senseless objections prevail with men who have seriously read this scripture?—‘He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.’ But truly, when sloth and ignorance meet together, if you tell men what powers their nature, assisted by preventing grace, has to work, and how necessary obedience is to salvation, they with the sluggard fold their arms in their bosom doing nothing; telling us, ‘These doctrines are *Arminianism* and flat *Popery*. But deceive not yourselves: Whether this doctrine takes hold on your judgments now, I know not; but this I know assuredly,—it shall take hold on your consciences either here or hereafter; and then it will not suffice you to say, either that you had no power to do any thing, or that Christ has already done all for you.’”

This excellent discourse should be in all the houses of professors. It would shame the careless Remonstrants, and show them how orthodox some Calvinists are in point of works; and it would confound the slothful Calvinists, and make them see how they have left *Practical Christianity* for *Antinomian Crispianity*. For East cannot be farther from West, than the preceding extract of Bishop Hopkins’s sermon is from the following propositions extracted from Dr. Crisp’s, which some make the standard of evangelical preaching. They are refuted also in *Gospel Truth Vindicated by Mr. Williams*, whose excellent refutation is recommended by fifty-three Calvinist Divines of the last century: And Mr. Wesley’s propositions in the Minutes of the Conference, held in 1770, may be looked upon as the ground on which that refutation stands.

“Must not a believer, an elect, be reckoned to be a sinner while he does sin? No. Though he

does sin, yet he is not reckoned as a sinner ; his sins are reckoned to be taken away from him.—A man does sin against God ; God reckons not his sin to be his ; he reckons it Christ's, therefore he cannot reckon it to be his.—There is no condition in the covenant of grace ; man has no tie upon him to perform any thing whatsoever, as a condition that must be observed on his part ; and there is not one bond or obligation upon man to the fulfilling of his part of the covenant, or partaking of the benefits of it.—There is no better way to know your portion in Christ, than upon the general tender of the Gospel to conclude absolutely he is yours : Say, ‘ My part is as good as any man's : ’ Set down thy rest here ; question it not, but believe it.—Christ belongs to sinners as sinners ; and if there be no worse than sinfulness, rebellion, and enmity in thee, he belongs to thee, as well as to the world.—Christ does justify a person before he believes ; we do not believe that we may be justified, but because we are justified. The elect are justified from eternity ; at Christ's death ; and the latest time is before they are born.—It is a received conceit among persons, that our obedience is the way to heaven ; and though it be not, say they, the cause of our reign, yet it is the way to the kingdom : But I must tell you, all this sanctification of life is not a jot the way of that justified person to heaven.—To what purpose do we propose to ourselves the gaining of that by our labour and industry, that is already become ours before we do one jot ?—Must they now labour to gain these things, as if it were referred to their well or evil walking ? that as they shall walk, so they shall speed ? The Lord does nothing in his people upon conditions. The Lord intends not that by our obedience we shall gain something, which, in case of our failing, we shall miscarry of.—While you labour to get by duties, you provoke

God as much as in you lies.—We must work from life, and not for life.—There is nothing you can do from whence you ought to expect any gain to yourselves.—Love to the brethren, universal obedience, and all other inherent qualifications, are no signs by which we should judge of our state.—Every elect vessel, from the first instant of his being, is as pure in the eyes of God from the charge of sin, as he shall be in glory.—Though such persons do act rebellion, yet the loathsomeness and hatefulness of this rebellion is laid on the back of Christ; he bears the sin, as well as the blame, and shame: And God can dwell with persons that act the thing, because all the filthiness of it is translated from them upon the back of Christ.—It is the voice of a lying spirit in your hearts that says, ‘You that are believers (as David) have yet sin wasting your conscience.’ David indeed says, *My sins are gone over my head;* but he speaks from himself, and all that he speaks from himself is not truth.—There is as much ground to be confident of the pardon of sin to a believer, as soon as he committed it, as to believe it after he has performed all the humiliation in the world. A believer may be assured of pardon as soon as he commits any sin, even adultery and murder.—There is not one fit of sadness in a believer but he is out of the way of Christ.—God does no longer stand displeased though a believer do sin often.—There is no sin that ever believers commit, that can possibly do them any hurt. Therefore, as their sins cannot hurt them, so there is no cause of fear in their sins committed.—Sins are but scarecrows and bugbears to fright ignorant children, but men of understanding see they are counterfeit things. Sin is dead, and there is no more terror in it than in a dead lion.—If we tell believers, except they walk thus and thus holily, and do these and those good works, God will be angry with them, we abuse

the Scriptures, undo what Christ has done, injure believers, and tell God lies to his face.—All our righteousness is filthy, full of menstruosity, the highest kind of filthiness:—Even what is the Spirit's, must be involved within that which is a man's own, under the general notion of *dung*.—God has done every thing in Christ, and taken away all things that can disturb our peace; but man will be mincing the truth, and telling you that if you keep close to God, and refrain from sin, God will love you.—Christ does all his work for him as well as in him that believes. If persons are not united to Christ, and do not partake of justification before they do believe, they will be bringing to life again the covenant of works; you must of necessity press upon yourselves these terms, ‘I must do, that I may have life in Christ; I must believe.’ Now if there be believing first, then there is doing before living.—To what purpose do we tell men of wrath and damnation? We had as good hold our tongues,’ &c. &c.

“I observe,” says my judicious Calvinist author, “the pretence for these opinions is, that they exalt CHRIST and FREE GRACE. Under this shadow Antinomianism set up in Germany. This was the great cry in England about fifty years ago. The Synod of New-England expose this as one of the speeches of them whom we call Antinomians: ‘Here is a great stir about grace and looking to hearts: But give me Christ; I seek not for graces, but for Christ: I seek not for sanctification, but for Christ: Tell me not of meditation and duties, but tell me of Christ.’ Dr. Crisp very often bears upon this point, as if all he said was to advance Christ and grace.”

You will perhaps say, that our gospel ministers are far more guarded than the Doctor. But I would ask whether all this scheme is not collected, and made to centre, in the one fashionable expres-

sion of *finished salvation*; which seems to be our *Shibboleth*.

If the *salvation* of the elect was *finished* upon the cross, then was their *justification* finished, their *sanctification* finished, their *glorification* finished: For *justification*, *sanctification*, and *glorification*, *finished*, are but the various parts of our *finished salvation*. If our *justification* be *finished*, there is no need of believing in order to be *justified*. If our *sanctification* be *finished*, there is no need of mortifying one sin, praying for one grace, taking up one cross, parting with either right eye or right hand, in order to perfect holiness. Again,

Suppose our *salvation* be *finished*, it follows, Christ has done all, and we are to do nothing. Obedience and good works are no more necessary in order to it, than cutting and carrying stones are necessary to the completing of Westminster-bridge. We are as perfect in Christ, as completely blameless and holy in the midst of all our sins, as ever we shall be in glory. In a word, if *salvation* be *finished*, well ordered in all things and sure, our sins cannot take any thing from it, nor our righteousness have any thing to do with it. The little flock of the elect shall be saved, nay, are fully saved now, do what they please; and the multitudes of the reprobates shall be damned, do what they can. Give me only the smooth ring of *finished salvation*, and, without offering the least violence to common sense, I shall necessarily draw every link of Dr. Crisp's Antinomian chain.

I have often wondered how so many excellent men can be so fond of an expression which is the stalking horse of every wild ranter. Is it scriptural? Which of the Prophets or Apostles ever used it on earth? Do even "the spirits of just men made perfect," ascribe *finished salvation* to the Lamb? If they did, would not their uncollected dust, and the souls "crying under the altar," prove their praises

premature? Will salvation be *finished* till "the last enemy, death," is fully overcome by the general resurrection? Again,

Is the expression of *finished salvation* consistent with the analogy of faith? Does it not supersede our Lord's intercession at the right hand of God? Whether he intercede for the reprobate or the elect, acts he not a most unwise part? Is he not giving himself a needless trouble, whether he intercede for the *justification* of those whom he has himself *reprobated*, or for the salvation of those whose salvation is *finished*? Is it right to offer an insult to our High Priest upon his mediatorial throne, under pretence of honouring him on the cross? And may not I say, with judicious Baxter, "See what this overdoing tends to!" See what contempt it pours upon him "who is the brightness of his Father's glory!"

If that favourite expression be neither scriptural, nor agreeable to the analogy of faith, is it at least *rational*? I doubt it is not. *Finished salvation* implies both deliverance from bodily and spiritual evils, and our being made fully partakers of heavenly glory, in body and in soul. But waving the consideration of glory and heaven, and taking the word *salvation* in its negative and lower sense, I ask, Can it be said, with any propriety, that *bodily* salvation is *finished*, while innumerable pains and diseases surround us, to drag us to the grave, and deliver us to putrefaction? And is *spiritual* salvation finished? "Is the body of sin destroyed?" Do not those very Ministers who preach *finished salvation* with one breath, tell us with the next, "There is no deliverance (that is, *no finished salvation*) from sin in this life?"

And what end does that expression answer? I know of none but that of spreading Dr. Crisp's doctrine, and making thousands of deluded souls talk as if their salvation was *finished*, when they

have not so much as “ counted the cost ;” or when they have just laid the foundation.

Therefore, with all due deference to my brethren and fathers who preach *finished salvation*, I ask, Would it not be better to drop that doctrine, with all the other dangerous refinements of Dr. Crisp, and preach *a finished atonement, a present sovereign remedy, completely prepared* to heal our spiritual infirmities, assuage all our miseries, and fit us for finished salvation in glory? Would not this be as well at least, as to help our patients to compose themselves to sleep upon the pillow of Antinomianism, by making them believe that the preparation of the remedy, and a complete cure, are all one; so that now they have absolutely nothing to do in order to saving health, and (as the Apostles concluded about Lazarus,) “ if they sleep they shall do well ? ” And should we not, even in speaking of *redemption*, imitate the judicious Calvinists of the last century, who carefully distinguished between redemption by the *price* of Jesus’s blood, and redemption by the *power* of his Spirit ? “ The former,” said they, “ was finished upon the cross, but the latter is not so much as begun in thousands ; even all that are unborn or unconverted.”

V. To speak the melancholy truth, how few individuals are free from practical Antinomianism ! Setting aside their attendance on the ministry of the word, where is the material difference between several of our genteel believers and other people ? Do not we see the sumptuous furniture in their apartments, and fashionable elegance in their dress ? What sums of money do they frequently lay out in costly superfluities to adorn their persons, houses, and gardens ?

Wise Heathens, by the help of a little philosophy, saw the impropriety of having any useless brittle vessels about them : They broke them on purpose

that they might be consistent with the profession they made of *seeking wisdom*. But we, who profess to have found "CHRIST the wisdom of God," purchase such vessels and toys at an high rate, and, instead of hiding them for shame, as Rachel did her Teraphim for fear, we "write our *motto* over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall;" and any man that fears the God of Daniel may, upon studying the Chinese characters, make out ANTINOMIANISM.

Our Lord, whose garment does not appear to have been cut in the height of the fashion, as it was made without seam, informs us, that they who "wear soft clothing," and splendid apparel, "are in kings' houses." But had he lived in our days, he might have found them in God's houses, in our fashionable churches or chapels. There you may find people professing to believe the Bible, who so conform to this present world, as to wear gold, pearls, and precious stones, when no distinction of office or state obliges them to it; in direct opposition to the words of two Apostles: "Let not your adorning," says St. Peter, "be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel." "Let them adorn themselves in modest apparel," adds St. Paul, "not with curled hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array."

Multitudes of professors, far from being convinced of their sin in this respect, ridicule Mr. Wesley, for bearing his testimony against it. The opposition he dares make to that growing branch of vanity, affords matter of pious mirth to a thousand Antinomians. Isaiah could openly reprove the "haughty daughters of Zion, who walked with stretched forth necks, wanton eyes, and tinkling feet:" He could expose "the bravery of their fashionable ornaments, their round tires like the moon, their chains, bracelets, head-bands, rings,

and ear-rings :" But some of our humble Christian ladies will not bear a reproof from Mr. W. on the head of dress. They even laugh at him, as a *pitiful legalist* ; and yet, O the inconsistency of the Antinomian spirit, they call Isaiah the *Evangelical Prophet* !

Finery is often attended with an expensive table, at least with such delicacies as our purse can reach. St. Paul " kept his body under," and was in " fastings often ;" and our Lord gives us directions about the proper manner of *fasting*. But the Apostle did not *know* the easy way to heaven taught by Dr. Crisp ; and our Lord did not approve of it, or he would have saved himself the trouble of his directions. In general we look upon fasting, much as we do upon penitential flagellation. Both equally raise our pity : We leave them to Popish devotees. Some of our good old Church-people will yet fast on Good Friday ; but our fashionable believers begin to cast away that last scrap of self-denial. Their faith, which should produce, animate, and regulate works of mortification, goes a shorter way to work ; it explodes them all.

" But perhaps, ' we wrestle not with flesh and blood,' because we are entirely taken up with ' wrestling against principalities, powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places.' "

Alas ! I fear this is not the case. Few of us know what it is " to cry out of the deep," to pray and believe, till in the name of Jesus we force our way beyond flesh and blood, come within the reach of the internal world, conflict in an agony with the powers of darkness, vanquish Apollyon in all his attacks, and continue wrestling until the day of eternity breaks upon us, and the God of Jacob " blesses us with all spiritual benedictions in heavenly places." John Bunyan's Pilgrim, the old Puritans, and the first Quakers, had such engage-

ments, and gained such victories; but they soon got over the hedge of internal activity, into the smooth easy path of Laodicean formality. Most of us called Methodists have already followed them; and when we are in that snare, Satan scorns to conflict with us; puny flesh and blood are more than a match for us. We fall asleep under their bewitching power, and begin to dream strange dreams: "Our salvation is finished, we have got above legality, we live without frames and feelings, we have attained Christian liberty, we are perfect in Christ, we have nothing to do, our covenant is sure," &c. True! but unhappily it is a covenant with the flesh: Satan, who is too wise to break it by rousing us in the spirit, leaves us to our delusions; and we think ourselves in the kingdom of God, when we are only in a fool's paradise.

"At midnight, I will rise and praise thee," said once a pious Jew; but we, pious Christians, who enjoy both health and strength, are imprisoned within our bed-curtains, long after the sun has *called* the diligent *to their labour*. When "the fear of the Lord" was in us "the beginning of wisdom," we durst "not so confer with flesh and blood." We had then a little faith; and, so far as it went, it showed itself by our works. Then we could, without hesitation, and from our hearts, pray, "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people, that they plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by thee be plenteously rewarded, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Collect for the last Sunday in Trinity.)—We believed there was some truth in these words of our Lord: "Except a man forsake all that he hath, deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple.—He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for my sake shall find it.—If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into life with

one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.—Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for I say unto you, that many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able;” because they will seek to enter in at the *wide*, rather than *the strait gate*; the *Antinomian* or *Pharisaic*, rather than the *evangelically legal*, gate of salvation. But now, “We know better,” say some of us, “we have got over our scruples and legality. We can ‘conform to this present world,’ cleave to, instead of ‘forsaking all we have,’ and even grasp what we have not.” What a strange way this of “growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ crucified!”

Daniel informs us, that he “made his petition three times,” and David, that he offered up his “praises seven times, a day.” Once also, like them, we had fixed hours for private prayer and self-examination, for reading the Scriptures, and meditating upon them, perhaps upon our knees; but we thought this was legality too, and under the specious pretence of going beyond forms, and learning “to pray always,” we first threw away our form, and soon after our endeavours to watch unto prayer. Now, we scarcely ever, for any length of time, solemnly bend the knee before “our Father who seeth in secret.” And instead of leaning on Christ’s bosom in all the means of grace, we take our graceless rest on the bosom of that painted Jezebel, *Formality*.

If we are backward in performing that leading work of *PIETY*, *secret prayer*; is it a wonder if, in general, we are averse to every work of *MERCY* that costs us something, besides a little of our superfluous money? And would to God some did not even grudge this, when it is pressed out of their purses, by the importunate addresses of those who beg for the poor! However, we give yet at the door of a church, or at a communion; whether with indifference or joy, whether out of custom, shame,

or love, we seldom examine. But that important branch of St. James's "pure and undefiled religion before God, even the Father," which consists "in visiting the fatherless and widows in their afflictions," is with many almost as much out of date as a pilgrimage to our Lady of Loretto.

O ye forsaken sons of poverty, and ancient daughters of sorrow, who pine away in your desolate garrets or cellars, without fire in winter, destitute of food, physic, or nurse in sickness; raise a moment your emaciated bodies, wrapt up in threadbare blankets, if you are possessed of any such a covering, and tell me, tell the world, how many of our gay professors of religion have sought and found you out in your deplorable circumstances! How many are come to visit, in you, and worship with you, *the Man of Sorrows*; who once lay on the cold ground in a bloody sweat? When did they make your bed in your sickness? When have they kindly inquired into all your wants, sympathized in all your temptations, supported your drooping heads in a fainting fit, revived your sinking spirits with suitable cordials, gently wiped your cold sweats, or mixed them with tears of pity?

Alas! you sometimes find more compassion and assistance in your extremity, from those who "never name the name of Christ," than from our easy, Antinomian, Laodicean *believers*. Their wants are richly supplied; that is enough: They do not inquire into yours, and *you* are ashamed or afraid to trouble them with the dismal story. Nor indeed would some of them understand you if you did. Their uninterrupted abundance makes them as incapable of feeling for you, as the warm inhabitants of Ethiopia are to feel for the frozen Icelanders.

While the table of some believers (so called) is alternately loaded with a variety of delicate meats, and rich wines, what have ye to sustain sinking

nature? Alas! one can soon see your all of food and physic. A pitcher of water stands by your bed-side upon a stool, the only piece of furniture left in your wretched apartment. The Lord God bless the poor widow that brought it you, with her *two mites*! Heaven reward a thousand-fold the loving creature that not only shares with you, but freely bestows upon you, "all her living, even all that she has;" when *they* forgot to inquire after you, and to send you something out of their luxurious abundance! "The Son of Man," once forsaken by all the disciples, and comforted by an angel, "make her bed in the time of sickness!" and a waiting band of celestial spirits carry her charitable soul into Lazarus's bosom in the awful hour of dissolution! I had rather be in her case, though she should not confidently profess the faith, than in *yours*, O ye caressed believers, who let your affluence overflow to those who have more need to learn frugality in the school of seareeness, than to receive bounties which feed their sensuality and indulge their pride.

And ye women professing godliness, who enjoy the comforts of health and abundance, in whose "streets there is no complaining, no decay," whose "daughters are as the polished corners of the temple;" when did *you* ever want visitors? Alas! ye have too many, for the good they do you, or that you do them. Does not your conversation, which begins with the love of Jesus, terminate in religious scandal; as naturally as your soul, which once *began in the Spirit, ends now in the flesh?* O that your visitors were as ready to attend work-houses, jails, infirmaries, and hospitals, as they are to wait upon you! O that at least, like the Doreases, the Phebes, and Priscillas of old, you would teach them cheerfully to work for the poor, to be free servants of the Church, and tender nurses of the sick! O that they saw in you all how the holy

women, the “widows who were widows indeed, formerly entertained strangers, washed the saints’ feet, instructed the younger women,” and “continued night and day in prayer!” But, alas! “the love of many,” once warm as the smoking flax, “is waxed cold,” instead of taking fire, and flaming. They who once began “to seek the profit of many,” now seek *their own* ease or interest; *their own* honour or indulgence.

Almost all, when they come to the foot of the hill Difficulty, take their leave of Jesus as a guide, because he leads on through spiritual death to the regeneration. Some disliking that “door,” like “thieves and robbers, climb up” an easier “way.” And others leaving the highway of the *cross*, under the fair pretence that blind Papists walk therein, make for themselves and others broad and downward roads, to ascend the steep hill of Zion!

Those easy paths are innumerable, like the people that walk in them. O that “my eyes,” like David’s, did “run down like water, because men,” professing godliness, “keep not God’s law,” and are even offended at it! “Their mouth talketh of vanity, they dissemble with their double heart, and their right hand is a right hand” of *sloth, or positive iniquity*. O that I had the tenderness of St. Paul, “to tell you, even weeping, of those who mind earthly things;” those “who have sinned and have not repented;” those who, while they boast they “are made free” by the Son of God, are “brought under the power of *many* things;” whom foolish desires, absurd fears, undue attachments, imported superfluities, and disagreeable habits, keep in the most ridiculous bondage!

“O that my head were waters, and my eyes fountains of tears,” to deplore, with Jeremiah, “the slain of the daughters of God’s people;” who “live in pleasure, and are dead while they live!” and to lament over spiritual Pharisees of every sort;

those who say, "Stand by; I am holier than thou;" and those who fix the names of *poor creatures! blind! carnal!* upon every publican they see in the temple; and boldly placing themselves among the elect, thank God they are not as other men, and in particular as *the reprobates!*

Who can number "the adulterers and adulteresses, who know not that the friendship of the world is enmity against God?" the concealed idolaters, who have their "chambers of imagery" within, and "set up their idols in their hearts?" the envious Cains, who carry murder in their breast? the profane Esaus, who give up their birthright for a sensual gratification; and covetous Judases, who "sell the truth" which they should "buy," and part with Christ "for filthy lucre's sake?" "the sons of God, who look at the fair daughters of men, and take to themselves wives of all whom they choose?" the gay Dinahs who "visit the daughters of the land," and come home polluted in body or in soul? the filthy Onans, "who defile the temple of God?" the "Prophets of Bethel," who deceive the "Prophets of Judah," entice them out of the way of self-denial, and bring the roaring lion and death upon them? the fickle Mareuses, who depart when they should "go to the work?" the self-made prophets, who "run before they are sent," and scatter instead of "profiting the people?" the spiritual Absalomis, who rise against their fathers in the Gospel; and, in order to reign without them, raise a rebellion against them? the furious Zedekiahis, who "make themselves horns of iron to push" the true servants of the Lord, because they will not "prophesy smooth things and deceit," as they do?

Who can count the fretful Jonahs, who are "angry to death" when the worm of disappointment "smites the gourd" of their creature-happiness? the weak Aarons, who dare not resist a

multitude, and are carried by the stream into the greatest absurdities? the jealous Miriams, who rise against the Ministers that God honours? the crafty Zibas, who calumniate and supplant their brethren? the treacherous Joabs, who *kiss* them, to get an opportunity of “stabbing them under the fifth rib?” the busy sons of Zeruiyah, who perpetually stir up resentment and wrath? the mischievous Doegs, who carry about poisonous scandal, and blow up the fire of discord? the hypocritical Gehazis, who look like saints before their masters and Ministers, and yet can impudently lie, and impiously cheat? the Gibeonites, always busy in hewing of wood and drawing water, in going through the drudgery of outward services, without ever aspiring at the adoption of sons? the halting Naamans, who serve the Lord, and bow to Rimmon? the backsliding Solomons, who once chose wisdom, but now pursue folly in her most extravagant and impious forms? the apostatizing Alexanders, who “tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing?” and, to include multitudes in one class, the Samaritans, who, by a common mixture of truth and error, of heavenly and earthly mindedness, “worship the Lord, and serve their own gods;” are one day for God, and the next for Mammon? or the thousands in Israel who “halt between two opinions,” crying out when Elijah prevails, “The Lord, He is the God!” and when Jezebel triumphs, returning to the old song, “*O Baal, save us! O Trinity of the world, money, pleasure, and honour, make us happy!*”

VI. Time would fail to describe the innumerable branches of Antinomianism, with all the fruits they bear. It may be compared to the astonishing tree, which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his mysterious dream: “A strong tree set in the midst of the

Church ; "the height thereof reaches unto heaven, and the sight thereof unto the ends of the earth. Its leaves are fair, and its fruit much." Thousands sleep under its fatal shadow, and myriads feed upon its pernicious fruit. At a distance it looks like "the tree of life planted in the midst of Paradise ; but it only proves "the tree of knowledge of good and evil." The woman (the Antinomian Church) is deceived by the appearance. "She sees that it is good for food, pleasant to the eye, and desirable to make one wise :" She eats to the full ; and, flushed with fond hopes of heaven, nay, fancying herself as God, she presents of the poisonous fruit, that intoxicates her, to the nobler part of the Church, the obedient members of the Second Adam.

O ye sons of God, and daughters of Abraham, who, in compliance with the insinuation of this deceived Eve, have already stretched forth your hands to receive her fatal present, instantly draw them back ; for eternal death is in the fruit. Flee from the tree on which she banquets, to the tree of life, the despised cross of Jesus ; and there feed on *Him crucified*, till you are "crucified with him ;" till the "body of sin is destroyed," and you feel eternal life abundantly circulating through all your sanctified powers.

And ye uncorrupted, self-denying followers of Jesus, whom love and duty still compel to bear your cross after him, join to pray that the *Watcher* and his "holy ones" may "come down from heaven, and cry aloud, Hew down the tree of" Antinomianism ; "cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, scatter its fruit, and let not even the stump of its roots be left in the earth." Your prayer is heard :

He comes ! he comes ! the Judge severe !  
The seventh trumpet speaks him near.

Behold, he appears in his glory, "with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all.

The thrones are cast down ; the Ancient of Days doth sit, whose garment is white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool : His throne is like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issues, and comes forth from before him : Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him. The trumpet sounds : The sea gives up the dead which are in it, death and Hades deliver up the dead which are in them.” The just are separated from the unjust ; and while the “ earth and the heaven flee away from the face of him that sits on the “ great resplendent “ throne, and there is found no place for them ; the judgment is set, the books are opened, and the dead, small and great, are judged, every one according to their works.”

Fear not, ye righteous. Ye are “ in the hand of the Lord, and there shall no torment touch you.” “ In the sight of the unwise ye seemed to die ;” they laughed at your dying daily : “ But ye are in peace, and your joy is full of immortality. Having been a little chastised, you shall be greatly rewarded ; for God proved you, and found you worthy of himself.” And now that “ the time of your visitation is come,” judge the nations, and reign with your Lord for ever ; for “ such as are faithful in love shall abide with him ; grace and mercy are to his saints, and he careth for his elect : He sets his sheep on his right hand,” and, stretching it towards them with ravishing looks of benignity and love, he finally justifies by works those whom he freely justified by faith. How sublime and solemn is the sentence !—

“ ‘ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was

in prison, and ye came to me.'—And do not ask with astonishment when you gave me all these tokens of your love; for whatever you did out of regard to me, my law, and my people, you did it 'in my name'; and whatever you did 'in my name' to the least of my creatures, and in particular to 'the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me.'

As if he said, "Think not that I am biassed by lawless partiality. No: I am 'the Author of eternal salvation to them that obeyed me,' and made a right use of my sanctifying blood. Such are 'the blessed of my Father,' and such are ye. Your faith unfeigned produced unfeigned love: You loved 'not in word only,' but 'in deed and in truth'; witness the works of mercy that adorned your lives, or the fruits of the Spirit that now replenish your souls. You, 'of all the families of the earth, have I known' with approbation. Ye have not 'denied me in works'; or if ye have, bitter repentance, and purifying, renovating faith followed your denial; and by keeping that faith, ye 'continued in my covenant,' and 'endured unto the end.'

"Thou seest it, righteous Father; for to thee the books are always open. Thou readest my laws in their minds, and beholdest my loving precepts written in their hearts: I therefore 'confess them before thee'; and before you, my angels, who have seen them agonize, and follow me through the regeneration. I take the new heavens and the new earth to witness, that 'I am to them a God, and they are to me a people. They walked worthy of God, who called them to his kingdom and glory;' therefore they are worthy of me.

"I have confessed your persons, O ye 'just men made perfect.' Ye precious jewels of my mediatorial crown; let me next reward your works. In the days of my flesh I declared, that 'a cup of water given in my name,' (and my name, ye know, is Mercy, Goodness, and Love,) 'should in no wise lose its reward;'

and that ‘ whosoever should forsake’ earthly friends or property for righteousness’ sake, should have an ‘ hundred-fold, and everlasting life.’ The pillars of heaven have given way ; but my promise stands firm as the basis of my throne. Triumph in my faithfulness, as you have in my forgiving love. I bestow on all, crowns of blissful immortality ; ‘ I appoint unto each a kingdom’ which shall not be destroyed. Be ‘ kings and priests unto God for ever.’ Prepare to follow me to the realms of glory, and there ‘ whatsoever is right (*δικαιον*) that shall ye receive ;’ in just proportion to the various degrees of perfection with which you have obeyed the law, and improved your talents.”

Thus are the persons of the righteous accepted, and their works “ praised in the gates” of heaven, and “ rewarded in the kingdom of their Father.” Thus they receive crowns of life and glory ; but it is only to cast them, to all eternity, with unutterable transports, grateful, humble love, at the feet of Him who was crowned with piercing thorns, and hung bleeding upon the cross, to purchase their thrones.

While they shout “ Salvation to God and the Lamb !” the Judge turns to the left hand, where trembling myriads stand waiting for their fearful doom. O how does confusion cover their faces, and guilty horror rack their breasts, while he says with the firmness of the eternal Lawgiver, and the majesty of the Lord of lords : “ Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ! For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; naked, and ye clothed me not ; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not !”\*

\* Should some sincere followers of Christ read these lines, and be convinced they never visited Christ in prison, never entertained him as a stranger, &c., it is proper they should be humbled for having overlooked this important part of pure religion ; and

Some are yet *speechless*; they only falter. With the trembling insolence of Adam, not yet driven out of Paradise, they even dare to plead their desperate cause. While stubborn sons of Belial say, "Lord, thy Father is merciful; and if thou didst die for *all*, why not for *us*?" while obstinate Pharisees plead the good they did in their own name to supersede the Redeemer's merit; methinks I hear a bold Antinomian addressing thus the Lord of glory:

"Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" Had we seen thee, dear Lord, in any distress, how gladly would we have relieved thy wants! Numbers can witness how well we spoke of thee, and thy righteousness: It was all our boast. Bring it out in this important hour. Hide not the Gospel of thy free grace.

consider next how far it is in their power literally to practise it. Some live at a great distance from prisons, and are necessarily detained at home. Some (as women) could not, in many places, visit prisoners with decency. Others are altogether unable to do good to the souls or bodies of the sick and captives, being themselves sick, poor, and confined. If thou art in any of these cases, believer, canst not thou influence others to do what is out of thy power? Caust thou not send the relief thou art unable to carry, and show thy good-will by cutting off thy superfluities, sparing some of thy conveniences, and at times a little of thy necessaries, for thy sick, naked, hungry, or imprisoned Lord? If thou art so indigent and infirm, that thou canst absolutely do nothing for the bodies of thy fellow-creatures, endeavour to do works of mercy for their souls; exhort, reprove, comfort, instruct, as thou canst, all around thee, in meekness of wisdom. If thou canst do works of mercy, neither with thy tongue, hands nor feet, then be more diligent to do them with thy heart. In spirit, visit prisons and sick beds. If thou hast no house to take in strangers, open to them thy heart; earnestly recommend them to God, who can supply all their wants, and open to them the gate of heaven, when they lie under a hedge; as he once did to Jacob in the fields of Bethel. Give thy heart continually to the Lord, and thou givest more than a mountain of gold; and the moment thou canst give a cup of water in his name, bestow it as freely as he did his blood; remembering, "God loves a cheerful giver, and that it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not."

We always delighted in pure doctrine, in ‘salvation without any condition; especially without the condition of works.’ Stand, gracious Lord, stand by us, and the Preachers of thy free grace, who made us hope thou wouldest confirm their word.

“ While they taught us to call thee, *Lord, Lord,* they assured us that love would *constrain* us to do good works; but finding no inward constraint to entertain strangers, visit the sick, and relieve prisoners, we did it not; supposing we were not called thereto. They continually told us ‘human righteousness was mere filth before thee; and we could not appear but to our everlasting shame, in any righteousness but thine, in the day of judgment.’ As to works, we were afraid of doing them, lest we should have ‘worked out’ abomination instead of ‘our salvation.’

“ And indeed, Lord, what need was there of our ‘working it out?’ For they perpetually assured us, it was *finished*; saying, ‘if we did any thing towards it, we worked for life, fell from grace like the bewitched Galatians, spoiled thy perfect work, and exposed ourselves to the destruction which awaits yonder trembling Pharisees.’

“ They likewise assured us, that all depended on *thy* decrees; and if we could but firmly believe our *election*, it was a sure sign we were interested in thy salvation. We did so; and now, Lord, for the sake of a few dung-works we have omitted, let not our hope perish! Let not electing and everlasting love fail! Visit our offences with a rod, but take not thy loving-kindness altogether from us; and break not David’s covenant, ‘ordered in all things and sure,’ of which we have so often made our boast.

“ May it please thee also to consider, that if we did not love and assist some of those whom thou callest *thy brethren*, it was because they appeared

to us so exceedingly legal; so strongly set against free grace, that we judged them to be obstinate Pharisees, and dangerous reprobates. We therefore thought that in hating and opposing them, we did thee service, and walked in thy steps. For thou hast said, ‘It is enough if the servant is as his Lord.’ And supposing ‘thou didst hate them,’ as thou dost Satan; we thought we need not be more righteous than thou, by loving them more than thou didst.

“O suffer us to speak on, and tell thee, we were champions for thy free grace. Like true Protestants, we could have burned against the doctrine of a second justification by works. Let then *grace* justify us *freely without works*. Shut those books\* filled with the account of our deeds, open the arms of thy mercy, and receive us just as we are.

“If *free grace* cannot justify us alone, let *faith* do it, together with *free grace*. We do *believe* finished salvation, Lord; we can join in the most evangelical creeds, and are ready to confess the virtue of thy atoning blood. But if thou sayest, we have *trampled it under foot*, and *made it a common thing*, grant us our last request, and it is enough:—

“Cut out the immaculate garment of ‘thy righteousness’ into robes that may fit us all, and put them upon us by *imputation*: So shall our nakedness be gloriously covered. We confess we have not dealt our bread to the hungry; but impute to us thy feeding five thousand people with loaves and fishes. We have seldom given drink to the thirsty, and often *put our bottle* to those who were

\* This pléa is excellent when a man comes to Christ, his High-Priest, as a sinner for pardon and holiness, or for his first justification on earth; but it will be absurd when he stands before the throne of Christ as a rebellious subject, or before his judgments at as a criminal, in the last day.

not athirst; but impute to us thy turning water into wine, to refresh the guests at the marriage feast in Cana; and thy loud call, ‘in the last day of the feast at Jerusalem; If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink !’ We never supposed it was our duty to ‘be given to hospitality;’ but impute to us thy loving invitations to strangers, thy kind assurances of receiving ‘all that come to thee;’ thy comfortable promises of ‘casting out none,’ and of feeding them even with thy ‘flesh and blood.’ We did not clothe the naked as we had opportunity and ability; but impute to us thy patient parting with thy seamless garment, for the benefit of thy murderer. We did not visit sick-beds and prisons, we were afraid of fevers, and especially of the jail distemper; but compassionately impute to us thy visiting Jairus’s daughter, and ‘Peter’s wife’s mother, who lay sick of a fever;’ and put to our account thy visiting putrifying Lazarus in the offensive prison of the grave.

“Thy imputed righteousness, Lord, can alone answer all the demands of thy law and thy Gospel. We did not dare to *fast*; we should have been called *legal* and *Papists* if we had; but thy forty days’ fasting in the wilderness, and thy continual abstinence imputed to us, will be self-denial enough to justify us ten times over. We did not ‘take up our cross;’ but impute to us thy *carrying THINE*; and even fainting under the oppressive load. We did not ‘mortify the deeds of the flesh, that we might live:’ This would have been evidently *working for life*; but impute to us the crucifixion of *thy* body, instead of our ‘crucifying our flesh with its affections and lusts.’ We hated private prayer; but impute to us thy love of that duty, and the prayer thou didst offer upon a mountain all night. We have been rather hard to forgive, but that defect will be abundantly made

up, if thou impute to us thy forgiving of the dying thief : And if that will not do, add, we beseech thee, the merit of that good saying of thine, ‘ Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.’ We have cheated the king of his customs ; but no matter, only impute to us thy exact paying of the tribute-money, together with thy good advice, ‘ Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s.’

“ It is true, we have brought up our children in vanity, and thou never hadst any to bring up. May not thy mercy find out an expedient, and impute to us, instead of it, thy obedience to thy parents ? And if we have received the sacrament unworthily, and thou canst not cover that sin with thy worthy *receiving*, indulge us with the imputation of thy worthy *institution* of it, and that will do yet better.

“ In short, Lord, own us *freely* as thy children. Impute to us thy perfect righteousness. Cast it as a cloak upon us, to cover our filthy souls and polluted bodies. ‘ We will have no righteousness but thine :’ Make no mention, we beseech thee, of *our* righteousness and personal holiness ; they are but *filthy rags*, which thy purity forbids thee to take into heaven ; therefore accept us without, and we shall shout, ‘ Free grace ! ’ ‘ Imputed righteousness ! ’ and ‘ Finished salvation ! ’ to eternity.”

While the bold Antinomian offers, or prepares to offer, this most impious plea, the Lord, who “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” casts a flaming look upon all the obstinate violators of his law. It pierces their conscience, rouses all its drowsy powers, and restores their memory to its original perfection. Not one wish passed their heart, or thought their brain, but is instantly brought to their remembrance : “ The books are opened” in their own breast, and every character has a voice which answers to the voice of “ the Lion of the tribe of Judah.”

“ Shall I pervert judgment,” says he, “ and justify the wicked for a bribe? the bribe of your abominable praises? ‘ Think you,’ by your base flatteries, ‘ to escape the righteous judgments of God?’ Is not my ‘ wrath revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness?’ Much more against you, ‘ ye vessels of wrath,’ who hold an impious absurdity in matchless insolence !

“ Said I not to Cain himself at the beginning, ‘ If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?’ Personal holiness, which ye scorned, is the *wedding garment* I now look for. ‘ I swear in my wrath,’ that, without it, ‘ none shall taste of my *heavenly supper*.—Ye have rejected my word’ of commandment, and ‘ I reject you from being kings.—Ye cried unto me, and I delivered you; yet have ye forsaken me and served other gods; therefore I will deliver you no more: Go and cry unto the gods whom ye have chosen. I wound the hairy scalp of such as have gone on still in their wickedness. Whosoever hath sinned against me, *to the last*, him do I blot out of my book:’ And this have ye done. ‘ Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, awake to everlasting shame!—Will ye set the briars and thorns against me in battle, *and make them puss* for roses of Sharon, and lilies of the valley? I will go through them *with a look*, and consume them together. The day is come that burneth like an oven; all that have *done* wickedly are stubble, and *must* be burned up root and branch. Upon such I rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest; this is the portion of their cup. Drink the dregs of it. Ye hypocrites, **DEPART!** And wring them out in everlasting burnings.”

“ Said I not? ‘ He that does good is of God; but he that does evil is not of God: Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life; for he that overcometh,’ and he only, “ shall be clothed in

white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.' And shall I keep *your* name in that book for having *continued in doing evil*? Shall I give *you* the crown of life for having been *unfaithful unto death*; and clothe *you* with the bright robes of my glory, because *you defiled your garments* to the last? Delusive hope! Because 'your mind was not to do good,' be ye rather 'clothed with cursing like as with a garment! Let it come into your bowels like water, and like oil into your bones.'

VII. If "these shall go into eternal punishment;" if such will be the dreadful end of all the impenitent Nicolaitans; if our churches and chapels swarm with them; if they crowd our communion tables; if they are found in most of our houses, and too many of our pulpits: If the seeds of their fatal disorder are in all our breasts; if they produce Antinomianism around us in all its forms; if we see bold Antinomians in *principle*, barefaced Antinomians in *practice*, and sly *Pharisaical Antinomians*, who speak well of the law, to break it with greater advantage; should not every one "examine himself whether he be in the faith," and whether he have an *holy Christ* in his heart, as well as a *sweet Jesus* upon his tongue, lest he should one day swell the tribe of Antinomian reprobates? Does it not become every Minister of Christ to drop his prejudices, and consider whether he ought not to imitate the old watchman, who fifteen months ago gave a *legal alarm* to all the watchmen that are in connexion with him? And should not we do the Church excellent service, if, agreeing to lift up our voices together against the common enemy, we gave God no rest in prayer, and our hearts in preaching, till we all did *our first works*; and *our latter end*, like Job's, *exceeded our beginning*?

Near forty years ago, some of the Ministers of Christ, in our Church, were called out of the extreme

of self-righteousness. Fleeing from it, we have run into the opposite with equal violence. Now that we have learned wisdom by what we have suffered, in going beyond the limits of truth both ways, let us return to a just scriptural medium. Let us equally maintain the two evangelical axioms on which the Gospel is founded : 1. "All our salvation is of God, by free grace, through the alone merits of Christ;" And, 2. "All our damnation is of ourselves, through our avoidable unfaithfulness."

This Second truth, as important as one half of the Bible, on which it rests, has not only been set aside as useless by thousands, but generally exploded as unscriptural, dangerous, and subversive of true Protestantism. Thus has the Gospel-balancee been broken, and St. James's pure religion despised. What we owe to truth in a state of oppression hath engaged me to cast in two mites into the scale of truth which Mr. W. has the courage to defend against multitudes of good men, who keep one another in countenance under their common mistake. I do not want *his* scale to preponderate to the disadvantage of free grace : If it did, far from rejoicing in it, I would instantly throw the insignificant weight of my pen into the other scale ; being fully persuaded that Christ can never be so truly honoured, nor souls so well edified, when we overdo, on either side of the question, as when we scripturally maintain the *whole* truth as it is in Jesus.

"But are we not in as much danger from overdoing in Pharisaic works, as in Antinomian faith?"

Not at present : The stream runs too rapidly on the side of lawless faith, to leave any just room to fear we shall be immediately carried into excessive working. There would be some ground for this objection, if we saw most professors of religion obstinately refusing to drink any thing but water,

eat any thing but dry bread or cheap vegetables; fasting themselves into mere skeletons; wearing sackcloth instead of soft linen; lying on the bare ground, with a stone for their pillow; imitating Origen, by literally "making themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake;" turning hermits, spending whole nights in contemplation in churches and church-yards; giving away all their goods, the necessaries of life not excepted; allowing themselves only three or four hours' sleep, and even breaking that short rest to pray or praise; overpowering their bodies the next day with hard labour, to keep them under; scourging their backs into blood every day; or forgetting themselves in prayer for hours in the coldest weather, till they had almost lost the use of their limbs. But I ask any unprejudiced person, who knows what is now called "Gospel-liberty," whether we are in danger of being thus *righteous over much*, or legal to such an extreme?

I grant, however, we are not absolutely safe from any quarter: Let us therefore continually stand on our guard. The right wing of Emmanuel's army, which defends living faith, is partly gone over to the enemy, and fights under the Nicolaitan banner. The left wing, which defends good works, is far from being out of the reach of those crafty adversaries. Therefore, as we are, or may be, attacked on every side; let us faithfully use "the word of truth, the power of God, and the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." Let us gallantly fly where the attack is the hottest; which now, *in the religious world*, is evidently where gross *Crispianity* (if I may use the word) is continually obtruded upon us as true *Christianity*: I say, *in the religious world*; for, in this controversy, "what have I to do to judge them also that are without?" Do ye not judge them that are within, and represent them as opposers of free grace?

Should Pharisees, while we are engaged in repelling Nicolaitans, try to rob us of present and free justification by faith, under pretence of maintaining justification by works in the last day ; or should they set us upon unnecessary and unscriptural works, we shall be glad of your assistance to repel them also.

If you grant it us, and do not despise ours, the world shall admire in the *Shulamite* (the Church at unity in herself) “ the company of two armies,” ready mutually to support each other against the opposite attacks of the Pharisees and Nicolaitans ; the *Popish workers* who exclude the Gospel, and the modern Gnostics, the *Protestant Antinomians*, who explode the law.

May the Lord God help us to sail safely through these opposite rocks, keeping at an equal distance from both, by taking Christ for our pilot, and the Scripture for our compass ! So shall we enter full sail the double haven of present and eternal rest. Once we were in immediate danger of splitting upon works, *without faith* ! now we are threatened with destruction from faith, *without works* ! May the merciful Keeper of Israel save us from both by a *living faith*, legally productive of all good works, or by *good works*, evangelically springing from a living faith ?

Should the Divine blessing upon these sheets bring one single reader a step towards that good old way, or only confirm one single believer in it, I shall be “ rewarded a hundred-fold” for this little “ labour of love ;” and I shall be even content to see it represented as the invidious labour of malice ; for what is my reputation to the profit of one blood-bought soul ?

Beseeching you, dear Sir, for whom these letters are first intended, to set me right where I am wrong ; and not to despise what may recommend itself in them to reason and conscience, on account

of the blunt and Helvetic manner in which they are written, I remain, with sincere respect,

Honoured and Reverend Sir,

Your affectionate and obedient servant,

In the practical Gospel of Christ,

J. FLETCHER.

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### POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE these Letters were sent to the press, I have seen a pamphlet, entitled "A Conversation between Richard Hill, Esq., the Rev. Mr. Madan, and Father Walsh," a Monk at Paris, who condemned Mr. Wesley's Minutes as "too near Pelagianism," and the author as "a Pelagian;" adding, that "*their* doctrine was a great deal nearer that of the Protestants." Hence the editor concludes, that "the principles in the extract of the Minutes are too rotten even for a Papist to rest upon," and supposes that "Popery is about the midway between Protestantism and Mr. J. Wesley." I shall just make a few strictures upon that performance.

1. If an Arian came to me, and said, "You believe that 'Jesus Christ is God over all, blessed for ever.' *Pelagius, that heretic who was publicly excommunicated by the whole Catholic Church,* was of your sentiment; therefore you are a Pelagian; give up your heresy:" Should I, upon such an assertion, give up the Godhead of our Saviour? Certainly not. And shall I, upon a similar argument, advanced by the help of a French Monk, give up truths with which the practical Gospel of Jesus Christ must stand or fall? God forbid!

2. We desire to be confronted with all the pious Protestant Divines, except those of Dr. Crisp's class, who are a party. But who would believe it? The suffrage of a Papist is brought against us! Asto-

nishing ! that our opposers should think it worth their while to raise one recruit against us in the immense city of Paris, where fifty thousand might be raised against the Bible itself !

3. So long as Christ, the Prophets, and Apostles are for us, together with the multitude of the Puritan Divines of the last century, we shall smile at an army of Popish Friars. The knotted whips, that hang by their sides, will no more frighten us from our Bibles, than the *ipse dixit* of a Benedictine Monk will make us explode, as heretical, propositions which are demonstrated to be scriptural.

4. An argument which has been frequently used of late against the *Anti-Calvinist* Divines, is, "This is downright Popery ! This is worse than Popery itself !" And honest Protestants have been driven by it to embrace doctrines, which were once no less contrary to the dictates of their consciences, than they are still to the word of God. It is proper, therefore, such persons should be informed, that Augustine, the Calvin of the fourth century, is one of the saints whom the Popes have in the highest veneration ; and that a great number of Friars in the Church of Rome are champions for Calvinism, and oppose St. Paul's doctrine, that "the grace of God bringing salvation has appeared unto all men," as strenuously as some *real Protestants* among us. Now, if good Father Walsh be one of that stamp, what wonder is it that he should so well agree with the gentlemen who consulted him ? If Calvinism and Protestantism are synonymous terms, as some Divines would make us believe, many Monks may well say, that "their doctrine is a great deal nearer that of the Protestants," than the Minutes ; for they may even pass for *real Protestants*.

5. But whether the good Friar be a hot *Jansenist*, or only a warm *Thomist*, (so they call the Popish Calvinists in France,) we appeal from his bar to the tribunal of Jesus Christ, and from the pub-

lished Conversation, "to the law and the testimony." What is the decision of a Popish Monk, to the express declarations of the Scripture, the dictates of common sense, the experience of regenerate souls, and the writings of a cloud of Protestant Divines? No more than a grain of loose sand, to the solid rock on which the Church is founded.

I hope the gentlemen concerned in the Conversation lately published will excuse the liberty of this Postscript. I reverence their piety, rejoice in their labours, and honour their warm zeal for the Protestant cause: But that very zeal, if not accompanied with a close attention to every part of the Gospel-truth, may betray them into mistakes which may spread as far as their respectable names. I think it, therefore, my duty to publish these strictures, lest any of my readers should pay more regard to the good-natured Friar, who has been pressed into the service of Dr. Crisp, than to St. John, St. Paul, St. James, and Jesus Christ; on whose plain declarations I have shown that the Minutes are founded.

THIRD CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM :

IN

A LETTER

TO THE

AUTHOR OF PIETAS OXONIENSIS.

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BY THE

VINDICATOR OF THE REV. MR. WESLEY'S  
MINUTES.

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Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and [scriptural] doctrine; for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.—*2 Tim. iv. 2, 3.*

Wherefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. But let brotherly love continue.—*Titus i. 13. Heb. xiii. 1.*

## THIRD CHECK TO ANTINOMIANISM.

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TO THE AUTHOR OF PIETAS OXONIENSIS.

HONOURED AND DEAR SIR,

ACCEPT my sincere thanks for the Christian courtesy with which you treat me in your Five Letters. The title-page informs me, that a concern for "mourning backsliders, and such as have been distressed by reading Mr. Wesley's Minutes, or the Vindication to them," has procured me the honour of being called to a public correspondence with you. Permit me, dear Sir, to inform you, in my turn, that a fear lest Dr. Crisp's balm should be applied, instead of the *Balm of Gilead*, to Laodicean loiterers, who may haply have been brought to penitential *distress*, obliges me to answer you in the same public manner in which you have addressed me.

Some of our friends will undoubtedly blame us for not yet dropping the contested point. But others will candidly consider, that controversy, though not desirable in itself, yet, properly managed, has a hundred times rescued Truth, groaning under the lash of triumphant Error. We are indebted to our Lord's controversies with the Pharisees and Scribes, for a considerable part of the four Gospels. And, to the end of the world, the Church will bless God for the spirited manner in which St. Paul, in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, defended the controverted point of a believer's present justification by faith; as well as for the steadiness with

which St. James, St. John, St. Peter, and St. Jude, carried on their important controversy with the Nicolaitans, who abused St. Paul's doctrine to Antinomian purposes.

Had it not been for controversy, Romish Priests would to this day have fed us with Latin Masses and a wafer-god. Some bold propositions, advanced by Luther against the doctrine of indulgences, unexpectedly brought on the Reformation. They were so irrationally attacked by the infatuated Papists, and so scripturally defended by the resolute Protestants, that these kingdoms opened their eyes, and saw thousands of images and errors fall before the ark of evangelical truth.

From what I have advanced in my SECOND CHECK, it appears, if I am not mistaken, that we stand now as much in need of a reformation from Antinomianism, as our ancestors did of a reformation from Popery; and I am not without hope, that the extraordinary attack which has lately been made on Mr. Wesley's Anti-Crispian propositions, and the manner in which they are defended, will open the eyes of many, and check the rapid progress of so enchanting and pernicious an evil. This hope inspires me with fresh courage; and turning from the Hon. and Rev. Mr. Shirley, I presume to face (I trust, in the spirit of love and meekness) my new respectable opponent.

I. I thank you, Sir, for doing Mr. Wesley the justice in your FIRST LETTER of acknowledging, that "man's faithfulness is an expression which may be used in a sober, Gospel sense of the words." It is just in such a sense we use it; nor have you advanced any proof to the contrary.

We never supposed, that "the faithfulness of God, and the stability of the covenant of grace, are affected by the unfaithfulness of man." Our Lord, we are persuaded, keeps his covenant, when he *spews a lukewarm unfaithful Laodicean out of his*

*mouth*, as well as when he says to the good and faithful servant, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." For the same covenant of grace which says, "He that believeth shall be saved; he that abideth in me, bringeth forth much fruit," says also, "He that believeth not shall be damned;—every branch in me that beareth not fruit is cast forth and burned."

Thanks be to divine grace, we make our boast of *God's faithfulness* as well as you; though we take care not to charge him, even indirectly, with our own unfaithfulness. But from the words which you quote, "My covenant shall stand fast with his seed," &c., we see no more reason to conclude that the obstinately unfaithful seed of Christ, such as Hymeneus, Philetus, and those who, to the last, "tread under foot the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified," shall not be cast off; than to assert that many individuals of David's royal family, such as Absalom and Amnon, were not cut off on account of their flagrant and obstinate wickedness.

We beseech you, therefore, for the sake of a thousand careless Antinomians, to remember that the Apostle says to every believer, "Thou standest by faith; behold therefore the goodness of God *towards thee*, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." We entreat you to consider, that even those who admire the point of your epigram, "Whenever we say one thing we mean quite another," will not be pleased if you apply it to St. Paul, as you have done to Mr. Wesley. And when we see God's covenant with David grossly abused by Antinomians, we beg leave to put them in mind of God's covenant with the house of Eli. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I *choose* thy father out of all the tribes of Israel to be my Priest;" but thou art unfaithful; "thou honourest thy sons above me.—*I said indeed*

*that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: But now be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* Behold the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy house; and I will raise me up a faithful Priest, that shall do according to that which is in my heart.” (1 Sam. ii.)

II. Your SECOND LETTER respects *working for life*. You make the best of a bad subject; and really some of your arguments are so plausible, that I do not wonder so many men should commence Calvinists, rather than be at the trouble of detecting their fallacy. I am sorry, dear Sir, I cannot do it without dwelling upon *Calvinism*. My design was to oppose *Antinomianism alone*; but the vigorous stand which you make for it upon Calvinian ground, obliges me to encounter you there, or to give up the truth which I am called to defend. I have long dreaded the alternative of displeasing my friends, or wounding my conscience; but I must yield to the injunctions of the latter, and appeal to the candour of the former. If impetuous rivers of Geneva Calvinism have so long been permitted to flow through England, and even deluge Scotland; have not I some reason to hope that a rivulet of Geneva Anti-Calvinism will be suffered to glide through some of Great Britain’s plains; especially if its little murmur harmonizes with the clearest dictates of reason, and loudest declarations of Scripture?

Before I weigh your arguments against *working for life*, permit me to point out the capital mistake upon which they turn. You suppose, that *free preventing grace* does not visit all men, and that all those in whom it has not prevailed, are as totally dead to the things of God, as a dead body is to the things of this life; and from this unscriptural supposition you very reasonably conclude, that we can no more turn to God, than corpses can turn them-

selves in their graves; no more work for life, than putrid carcases can help themselves to a resurrection.

This main pillar of your doctrine will appear to you built upon the sand, if you read the Scriptures in the light of that mercy which is over all God's works. There you will discover the various dispensations of the everlasting Gospel; your contracted views of divine love will open into the most extensive prospects; and your exulting soul will range through the boundless fields of that grace which is both richly free *in all*, and abundantly free *for all*.

Let us rejoice with reverence while we read such Scriptures as these: "The Son of Man is come to save that which is lost, *and* to call sinners to repentance. This is a true saying, and worthy of all acceptation,"—worthy of all men to be received, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.—To this end He both died and rose again, that he might be the Lord of the dead and living. He came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved, *and* that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE should bow, and EVERY TONGUE confess that he is Lord."

"Bound every heart, and every bosom burn," while we meditate on these ravishing declarations: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," that is, all mankind; unless it can be proved that some men never came under the curse of the law. He is the friend of *sinners*, the Physician of the *sick*, and the Saviour of the *world*: "He died the just for the unjust; he is the propitiation, not for our sins only, but for the sins of THE WHOLE WORLD. One died for ALL, because ALL were dead. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ," during the day of their visitation, "*all are*

*blessed with quickening grace, and therefore in the last day “ALL shall be made alive, to give an account of their blessing or talent.* He is the Saviour of ALL men, especially of them that believe : *And the news of his birth are tidings of great joy to ALL people.* As by the offence of one, judgment came upon ALL MEN, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon ALL MEN ; for Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for EVERY MAN : He is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the WORLD ;—therefore, God commandeth ALL MEN EVERYWHERE to repent ;—to look unto Him and be saved.”

Do we not take choice jewels from Christ’s crown, when we explain away these bright testimonies given by his free grace ? “ It pleased the Father by Him to reconcile ALL THINGS to himself.—The kindness and pity of God our Saviour towards men has appeared.—I will draw all men unto me.—God was in Him, reconciling the WORLD unto himself.” Hence he says to the most obstinate of his opposers, “ These things have I spoken unto you, that ye might be saved.—If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin,” in rejecting me, “ but now they have no cloke for their sin,” no excuse for their unbelief.

Once, indeed, when the Apostles were on the brink of the most dreadful trial, their compassionate Master said, “ I pray for them ; I pray not for the world.” As if he had said, “ Their immediate danger makes me pray as if there were but these eleven men in the world : ” “ Holy Father, keep them.” But having given them this seasonable testimony of a just preference, he adds, “ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them who shall believe, that they all may be one,” may be united in brotherly love :—He adds, “ that the WORLD may believe,” and may know “ that thou hast sent me.”

If our Lord’s not praying, for a moment, on a

particular occasion, for the world, implies that the world is absolutely reprobated, we should be glad of an answer to the two following queries:—1. Why did he pray the next day for Pilate and Herod, Annas and Caiaphas, the Priests and Pharisees, the Jewish mob and Roman soldiers; in a word, for the countless multitude of his revilers and murderers? Were they all elect, or was this ejaculation no prayer? “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!”—2. Why did he commission St. Paul to say? “I exhort, first of all, that supplications, prayers, and intercessions be made for all men; for this is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.”

Without losing time in proving, that none but artful and designing men use the word *all* to mean the *less number!*, and that *all*, in some of the above-mentioned passages, must absolutely mean *all mankind*, as being directly opposed to *all* that are *condemned* and *die in Adam*; and without stopping to expose the new Calvinian creation of “a whole world of elect;” upon the preceding Scriptures I raise the following doctrine of free grace: If “Christ tasted death for every man,” there is undoubtedly a Gospel for every man, even for those who perish by rejecting it.

St. Paul says, that “God shall judge the secrets of men according to his Gospel.” St. Peter asks, “What shall be the end of those who obey not the Gospel of God?” And the Apostle answers, Christ “revealed in flaming fire, will take vengeance on them who obey not the Gospel;” that is, all the ungodly who “receive the grace of God in vain, or turn it into lasciviousness.” They do not perish because the Gospel is a lie with respect to them;

but “because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” God, to punish their rejecting the truth, permits that they should believe a lie ; “that they all might be damned, who,” to the last hour of their day of grace, “believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

The latitude of our Lord’s commission to his Ministers demonstrates the truth of this doctrine : “Go into ALL the world, and teach ALL nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Hence those gracious and general invitations, “Ho ! every one that thirsteth” after happiness, “come ye to the waters ; if any man thirst” after pleasure, “let him come to me and drink.—Come unto me, all ye that labour” for want of rest, “and I will give it to you.—Who-soever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.—Ye adulterers ! draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you.—Behold I stand at the door and knock ; if any man open, I will come in and sup with him.—Go out into the highways and hedges, preach the Gospel to every creature ; and, lo ! I am with you to the end of the world.”

If you compare all the preceding Scriptures, I flatter myself, honoured Sir, you will perceive that as the redemption of Christ is general, so there is a general Gospel, which is more or less clearly revealed to all, according to the clearer or more obscure dispensation which they are outwardly under.

This doctrine may appear strange to those who call nothing Gospel but the last dispensation of it. Such should remember, that as a little seed sown in the spring is one with the large plant into which it expands in summer ; so the Gospel, in its least appearance, is one with the Gospel grown up to full maturity. Our Lord considering it both as sown in man’s heart, and sown in the world, speaks of it under the name of the *kingdom of heaven*,

compares it to corn, and considers first the *seed*, then the *blade*, next the *ear*, and last of all, *the full corn in the ear*.

1. The Gospel was sown in the world as a little but general seed, when God began to quicken mankind in Adam, by the precious promise of a Saviour; and when he said to Noah, the second general parent of men, "With thee will I establish my covenant;" blessing him and his sons after the deluge.

2. The Gospel appeared as corn in the blade, when God renewed the promise of the Messiah to Abraham, with this addition, that though the Redeemer should be born of his elect family, divine grace and mercy were too free to be confined within the narrow bounds of a peculiar election; therefore *in his seed*, that is, in Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, "all the families of the earth should be blessed;" as they are all cheered with the genial influence of the natural sun, whether he shines above or below their horizon, whether he particularly enlightens the one or the other hemisphere.

3. The Gospel word grew much in the days of Moses, Samuel, and Isaiah; "For the Gospel," says St. Paul, "was preached unto them as well as unto us," though not so explicitly. But when John the Baptist, a greater prophet than any of them, began to preach the Gospel of repentance, and point sinners to "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," then the *ear* crowned the *blade*, which had long been at a stand, and even seemed to be blasted.

4. The great Luminary of the Church shining warm upon the earth, his direct beams caused a rapid growth. The Favonian breathings and sighs which attended his preaching and prayers, the genial dews which distilled on Gethsemane, during his agony, the fruitful showers which descended on Calvary, while the blackest storm of divine wrath

rent the rocks around, and the transcendent radiance of our Sun rising after this dreadful eclipse to his meridian glory ;—all concurred to minister fertile influences to the *Plant of Renown*. And on the day of Pentecost, when power came from on high, when the fire of the Holy Ghost seconded the virtue of the Redeemer's blood, the *full corn* was seen in the mystical *ear*; the most perfect of the Gospel dispensations came to maturity; and Christians began to bring *forth fruit unto the perfection* of their own economy.

As some good men overlook the gradual displays of the manifold Gospel-grace of God, so others, I fear, mistake the essence of the Gospel itself. Few say, with St. Paul, “The Gospel of which I am not ashamed, is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth,—with the heart unto righteousness,” according to the light of his dispensation: And many are afraid of his Catholic doctrine, when he sums up the general everlasting Gospel, in these words : “God was not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also ; because that which may be known of God,” under their dispensation, “is manifest in them, God having showed it unto them.—For the grace of God, which bringeth salvation,” or rather,  $\eta\chi\rho\rho\eta\eta\sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho\rho\eta\sigma$ , the grace *emphatically* saving, “hath appeared unto all men ; teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, justly, and godly in this present world.”

“But how does this saving grace teach us ?” By proposing to us the saving truths of our dispensation, and helping our unbelief, that we may cordially embrace them ; for “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Even the Heathens, who “come to God, must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him ; for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, the same Lord over all, being rich unto all them that call upon him.”

Here the Apostle starts the great Calvinian objection: "But how shall they believe and call on him of whom they have not heard?" &c. And having observed that the Jews had heard, though few had believed, he says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," which is nigh, even in the mouth and in the heart of all who receive the truth revealed under their dispensation. Then resuming his answer to the Calvinian objection, he cries out, "*Have not they* (Jews and Greeks) all *heard* preachers, who invite them to believe that God is good and powerful, and, consequently, that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him?" "Yes, verily," replies he, "their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world."

If you ask, "Who are those general heralds of free grace, whose sound goes from pole to pole?" The Scripture answers with becoming dignity: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech or language," no country or kingdom, "where their voice is not heard. Their" instructing "line went through the earth," their vast parish, "and their words to the end of the world," their immense diocese. For "the invisible things of God," that is, his greatness and wisdom, his goodness and mercy, "his eternal power and godhead are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" and preserved; "so that" the very Heathens who do not obey their striking speech, "are without excuse; because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful."

This is the Gospel-alphabet, if I may be allowed the expression. The Apostle, like a wise instructor, proceeded upon the plan of this free grace, when he addressed himself to the Heathens: "We preach

unto you," said he to the Lycaonians, "that ye should turn from these vanities to serve the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things therein; who" even when he "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, left not himself without witness;" that is, without preachers, according to that saying of our Lord to his disciples, "Ye shall be my witnesses, and teach all nations." And these witnesses were the *good*, which God did, "the rain he gave us from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and the food and gladness with which he filled our hearts."

St. Paul preached the same Gospel to the Athenians, wisely coming down to the level of their inferior dispensation: "The God that made the world dwells not," like a statue, "in temples made with hands, nor hath he need of anything; seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. He hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth;" not that they might live like Atheists, and perish like reprobates, but "that they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him." Nor is this an impossibility, as "he is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain of your own poets have taught," justly asserting that "we are the offspring of God." Hence he proceeds to declare, that "God calls all men everywhere to repent;" intimating that, upon their turning to him, he will receive them as his dear children, and bless them as his beloved offspring.

These, and the like scriptures, forced Calvin himself into a happy inconsistency with Calvinism. "The Lord," says he, in an epistle prefixed to the French New Testament, "never left himself without a witness, even towards them unto whom he has not sent any knowledge of his word. Forasmuch as all creatures, from the firmament to the

centre of the earth, might be witnesses and messengers of his glory unto all men, to draw them to seek him; and indeed there is no need to seek him very far, for every one might find him in his own self."

And no doubt some have; for although "the world knew not God" by the wisdom that is "earthly, sensual, and devilish;" yet many have savingly known him by his general witnesses; that is, the "wonderful works that he doeth for the children of men;" for "that which may be known of God," in the lowest economy of Gospel-grace, "is manifest in them," as well as shown unto them.

"What! Is there something of God inwardly manifest in, as well as outwardly shown to, all men?" Undoubtedly; the grace of God is as the wind, "which bloweth where it listeth;" and it listeth to blow with more or less force successively all over the earth. You can as soon meet with a man that never felt the wind, or heard the sound thereof, as with one that never felt the divine breathing, or heard the still small voice, which we call *the grace of God*, and which bids us turn from sin to righteousness. To suppose the Lord gives us a thousand tokens of "his eternal power and Godhead," without giving us a capacity to consider, and grace to improve them, is not less absurd, than to imagine, that, when he bestowed upon Adam all the trees of Paradise for food, he gave him no eyes to see, no hands to gather, and no mouth to eat their delicious fruits.

We readily grant that Adam, and we in him, lost all by the fall; but Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; Christ, "the Repairer of the breach," mightier to save than Adam to destroy, solemnly gave himself to Adam, and to us in him, by the free everlasting Gospel which he preached in Paradise. And when he preached it, he undoubtedly gave Adam, and us in him, a capacity

to receive it ; that is, a power to believe and repent : If he had not, he might as well have preached to stocks and stones, to beasts and devils. It is offering an insult to the only wise God, to suppose that he gave mankind the light, without giving them eyes to behold it ; or, which is the same, to suppose that he gave them the Gospel, without giving them power to believe it.

As it was with Adam, so it is undoubtedly with all his posterity. By what argument or Scripture will you prove, that God excluded part of Adam (or, what is the same thing, part of his offspring, which was then part of his very person) from the promise and gift which he freely made him of “the seed of the woman, and the bruiser of the serpent’s head ?” Is it reasonable to deny the gift, because multitudes of infidels reject it, and thousands of Antinomians abuse it ? May not a bounty be really given by a charitable person, though it is despised by a proud, or squandered away by a loose, beggar ?

Waving the case of infants and idiots, was there ever a sinner under no obligation to repent and believe in a merciful God ? O ye opposers of free grace, search the universe with Calvin’s candle, and among your reprobated millions find out the person that never had a merciful God : And show us the unfortunate creature, whom a sovereign God bound over to absolute despair of his mercy from the womb. If there be no such person in the world, if all men are bound to repént and believe in a merciful God, there is an end of Calvinism. And unprejudiced men can require no stronger proof that all are redeemed from the curse of the Adamic law, which admitted of no repentance ; and that the covenant of grace which admits of, and makes provision for, it, freely extends to all mankind.

“ Out of Christ’s fulness all have received grace, a little leaven ” of saving power, an inward monitor, a divine reprover, a ray of *true heavenly light*, which

manifests first moral, and then spiritual, good and evil. St. John "bears witness of that light," and declares it was the spiritual "life of men, the true light, which enlightens" not only every man that comes into the Church, but "every man that cometh into the world,"—without excepting those who are yet in darkness. For "the light shineth in darkness," even when "the darkness comprehends it not." The Baptist bore also "witness of that light, that all men through it," not through him, "might believe,"—*εώς, light*, being the last antecedent, and agreeing perfectly with *ὅτι, αὐτός*.

Hence appears the sufficiency of that divine light to make all men believe in Christ, "the light of the world;" according to Christ's own words to the Jews. "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."—"Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you," even that total night of nature "when no man can work."

Those who resist this internal light, generally reject the external Gospel, or receive it only in the letter and history: And too many such there have been in all ages; for Christ "was in the world, even when the world knew him not." Therefore he was "manifest in the flesh." The same sun which had shined as the dawn, arose "with healing in his wings," and came to deliver the truth which was held in unrighteousness, and to help the light which was not comprehended by the darkness. But, alas! when "he came to his own," even then "his own received him not." Why? Because they were reprobates? No: But because they were moral agents.

"This is the condemnation," says he himself, "that light came into the world, but men" shut their eyes against it. "They loved darkness rather than light, because their works were evil." They would go on in the sins which the light reproved, and therefore they opposed it till it was quenched;

that is, till it totally withdrew from their hearts. To the same purpose our Lord says, "The heart of this people is waxed gross, their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed" against the light, "lest they should see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." The same unerring Teacher informs us, that "the devil cometh" to the way-side hearers, and "taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." And "if our Gospel be hid," says St. Paul, "it is to them that believe not, and are lost, whose minds the god of this world hath blinded, lest the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them."

From these Scriptures it is evident that Calvin was mistaken, or that the devil is a fool. For if a man is now totally blind, why should the devil bestir himself to *blind him?* And why should he fear "lest the Gospel should shine to them that are lost," if there be absolutely no Gospel for them; or they have no eyes to see, no capacity to receive it?

Whether sinners know their Gospel-day or not, they have one. Read the history of Cain, who is supposed to be the first reprobate; and see how graciously the Lord expostulated with him. Consider the old world: St. Peter speaking of them, says, "The Gospel was preached to them also that are dead;" for Christ "went by the Spirit, and preached even to those who were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited one hundred and twenty years in the days of Noah." Nor did the Lord wait with an intention of having them completely fattened for the day of slaughter: Far be the unbecoming thought from those who worship the God of love! Instead of entertaining it, let us "account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation;" that is, a beginning of salvation, and a sure pledge of it, if we know and redeem the accepted time; for "the Lord is long-suffering to

us ward, and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Nor does God's long-suffering extend to the elect only. It embraces also those "who treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, by despising the riches of Divine goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance." Of this the Jews are a remarkable instance: What could God have done more to his *Jewish* vineyard? He gathered the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vine; and yet when He looked that it should have brought forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes; when he sent his servants to receive the fruits, they were abused and sent away empty. Hence it is evident that the Jews had a day in which they could have brought forth fruit, or the wise God would no more have *looked for it*, than a wise man expects to see the pine-apple grow upon the hawthorn.

Nay, the most obstinate, pharisaic, and bloody of the Jews had a day in which our Lord in person "would have gathered them," with as much tenderness, as when "a hen gathers her brood under her wings." And when He saw their free-agency absolutely set against his loving-kindness he wept over them, and deplored their not having "known the things belonging to their peace, before they were hid from their eyes."

Our gracious God freely gives one or more talents of grace to every man; nor was ever any man "cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," but for the not using his talent aright, as our Lord sufficiently declares. (Matt. xxv. 30.) Alluding to that important parable, I would observe, that the Christian has *five talents*, the Jew *two*, and the Heathen *one*. If he that has *two talents* lays them out to advantage, he shall *receive a reward*, as well as he

that has *five*: And the *one talent* is capable of a proportionable improvement, as the *two* or the *five*. The equality of God's ways does not consist in giving just the same number of gracious talents to all; but, First, in not desiring "to gather where he has not strewed," or "to reap" above a proportion of his *seed*; and, Secondly, in graciously dispensing rewards according to the number of talents improved, and the degrees of that improvement; and in justly inflicting punishments, according to the number of talents buried, and the aggravations attending men's unfaithfulness. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

We frequently speak of God's secret decrees, the knowledge of which is as useless as it is uncertain; but seldom consider that solemn decree so often revealed in the Gospel, "To him that has" *grace to purpose*, "more shall be given; and from him that has not," that has buried his talent, and therefore, in one sense, has it not, "shall be taken away even that which he hath" to no purpose: According to our Lord's awful command,—"Take the talent from him" that hath buried it, "and give it to him that hath ten;" for the good and faithful servant shall have abundance.\* He who says, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is too just to look for an increase from those on whom he bestows no talent; and as he calls for repentance and faith, and for a daily increase of both, he has certainly bestowed upon us the seed of both; for he "gives seed to the sower," and does not desire "to reap where he has not sown."

Methinks my honoured opponent cries out with

\* I must do the Calvinists the justice to observe, that as our Lord says, "Ask and have;" so Elisha Coles says, "Use grace and have grace:" Which is all that we contend for, if the inseparable counterpart of the axiom be admitted, "Abuse grace and lose grace."

amazement : “ What ! have all men power to repent and believe ? ” And in the mean time a Benedictine Monk comes up to vouch that this doctrine is rank Pelagianism. But permit me to observe, that if Pelagius had acknowledged, as we do, the total fall of man, and ascribed, with us, to the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, all the power we have to repent and believe, none of the Fathers would have been so injudicious and uncharitable as to rank him among heretics. We maintain, that although “ without Christ we can do nothing ; ” yet so long as the day of salvation lasts, all men, the chief of sinners not excepted, can, through his free preventing grace, “ cease to do evil, and learn to do well,” and use those means which will infallibly end in the repentance and faith peculiar to the dispensation they are under, whether it be that of the Heathens, Jews, or Christians.

If the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*, and Father Walsh, deny this, they might as well charge Christ with the absurdity of “ tasting death for every man,” in order to keep most men from the very possibility of being benefited by his death. They might as well assert, that although *the free gift came upon ALL men*, yet it never came upon a vast majority of them ; and openly maintain, that Christ deserves to be called the *Destroyer*, rather than the *Saviour* of the world. For if the greatest part of mankind may be considered as *the world* ; if repentance and faith are absolutely impossible to them, and Jesus came to denounce destruction to all who do not repent and believe, let every thinking man say, whether he might not be called with greater propriety the *Destroyer* than the *Saviour* of the world ; and whether preaching the Crispian Gospel, is not like reading the warrant of inevitable damnation to millions of wretched creatures. But upon the scheme of what you call the “ Wesleyan Orthodoxy,” Christ is really “ the Saviour

of all men, but especially of them that believe :" For he indulges all with a day of salvation ; and if none but believers make a proper use of it, the fault is not in his partiality, but in their own obstinacy.

In what a pitiful light does your scheme place our Lord ! Why did he " marvel at the unbelief " of the Jews, if they could no more believe than a stone can swim ? And say not, " that he marvelled as a man ;" for the assertion absolutely unmans him. What man ever wondered, that an ass does not bray with a nightingale's melodious voice ? Nay, what child ever marvelled that the ox does not fly above the clouds with the soaring eagle ?

The same observation holds with regard to repentance. " Then he began," says St. Matthew, " to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, *because* they repented not." Merciful Saviour, forgive us ! We have insulted thy meek wisdom, by representing thee as cruelly upbraiding the lame for not running, the blind for not seeing, and the dumb for not speaking !

But this is not all: If Capernaum could not have repented at our Lord's preaching as well as Nineveh at the preaching of Jonas ; how do we reflect upon his mild equity and adorable goodness, when we represent him as pronouncing woe upon woe over the impenitent city, and threatening to sink it into a deeper hell than Sodom *because* it repented not ! And how ill does it become us to exclaim against Deists for robbing Christ of his Divinity, when we ourselves divest him of common humanity !

Suppose a schoolmaster said to his English scholars, " Except you instantly speak Greek, you shall all be severely whipped," you would wonder at the injustice of the school-tyrant. But would not the wretch be merciful, in comparison of a Saviour

(so called) who is supposed to say to myriads of men, that can no more repent than ice can burn, " Except ye repent, ye shall all perish ?" I confess, then, when I see real Protestants calling this doctrine, " the pure Gospel," and extolling it as " free grace," I do no more wonder that real Papists should call their bloody Inquisition, *the house of mercy*, and their burning of those whom they call heretics, an *auto de fé*.\*

**OBJECTION.**—" At this rate our salvation or damnation turns upon the good or bad use which we make of the manifold grace of God ! And we are in this world in a state of probation ; and not merely upon our passage to the rewards which everlasting love, or to the punishments which everlasting hatred, has freely allotted us, from the foundation of the world !"

**ANSWER.**—Undoubtedly ; for what man of sense (I except those who through hurry and mistake have put on the veil of prejudice) could show his face in a pulpit, to exhort a multitude of reprobates to avoid a damnation absolutely unavoidable ; and invite a little flock of elect, to lose no time in making sure an election, surer than the pillars of heaven ?

Again : Who but a tyrant will make the life of his subjects turn upon a thing that is not at all at their option ? When Nero was determined to put people to death, had he not humanity and honesty enough not to tantalize them with insulting offers of life ? To whom did he ever say, " If thou pluckest one star from heaven, thou shalt not die ; but if thou failst in the attempt, the most dreadful and lingering torments shall punish thy obstinacy ?" And shall I, shall my Christian brethren, represent the King of Saints as guilty of—what my pen refuses to write,—that which Nero himself was too merciful to contrive ?

\* An act of faith.

OBJECTION.—“ You do not state the case fairly. If all have sinned in Adam, and the wages of sin is death, God did the reprobates no wrong when he condemned them to eternal torments, before they knew their right hand from their left ; yea, before the foundation of the world.”

ANSWER.—The plausibility of this objection, heightened by voluntary humility, has misled thousands of pious souls : God give them understanding to weigh the following reflections :

1. If an unconditional, absolute decree of damnation passed upon the reprobates *before* the foundation of the world ; it is absurd to account for the justice of such a decree by appealing to a sin committed *after* the foundation of the world.

2. If Adam sinned necessarily according to the *secret will and purpose* of God, as you intimate in your fourth letter, many do not see how he, much more his posterity, could justly be condemned to eternal torments for doing an iniquity which *God's hand and counsel determined before to be done*.

3. As we sinned only *seminally* in Adam, if God had not intended our redemption, his goodness would have engaged him to destroy us *seminally*, by crushing the capital offender who contained us all : So there would have been a just proportion between the sin and the punishment ; for as we sinned in Adam without the least consciousness of guilt, so in him we should have been punished without the least consciousness of pain. This observation may be illustrated by an example. If I catch a mischievous animal, a viper for instance, I have undoubtedly a right to kill her, and destroy her dangerous brood, if she is big with young. But if, instead of dispatching her as soon as I can, I feed her on purpose to get many broods from her, and torment to death millions of her offspring, I can hardly pass for the good man who regards the life of a beast. Leaving to you the application of this

simile, I ask, Do we honour God when we break the equal beams of his perfections?—when we blacken his *goodness* and *mercy*, in order to make his *justice* and *greatness* shine with exorbitant lustre? If “a God all mercy is a God unjust,” may not we say, according to the rule of proportion, that “a God all justice is a God unkind,” and can never be He “whose mercy is over all his works?”

4. But the moment we allow that the blessing of the second Adam is as general as the curse of the first; that God “sets” again “life and death” before every individual, and that he mercifully restores to all a capacity of choosing life, yea, and of having it one day more abundantly than Adam himself had before the fall, we see his goodness and justicee shine with equal radiance, when he spares guilty Adam to propagate the fallen race, that they may share the blessings of a better covenant. For, according to the Adamic law, “judgment was by one sin to condemnation;” but the “free gift of the Gospel is of many offences to justification.” “For if through the offence of one the many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto the many.”

5. Rational and scriptural as the preceding observations are, we could spare them, and answer your objection thus: You think God may justly decree, that millions of his unborn creatures shall be “vessels of wrath” to all eternity, overflowing with the vengeance due to Adam’s pre-ordained sin; but you are not nearer the mark: For, granting that he could do it as a just, good, and merciful God; yet he cannot do it as a God of faithfulness and truth. His word and oath are gone forth together: Hear both:—“What mean ye that ye use this proverb?—‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge:’

As I live, says the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb." "The soul that sinneth" personally, "it shall die" eternally; "every one shall die for his own" avoidable "iniquity." "Every man that eateth sour grapes," when he might have eaten the sweet, "his teeth shall justly be set on edge." When God has thus made oath of his equity and impartiality before mankind, it is rather bold to charge him with contriving Calvin's election, and setting up the Protestant great image, before which a considerable part of the Church continually falls down and worships.

O ye honest Shadrachs, who gaze upon it with admiration, see how some Calvinian doctors deify it, *Decreta Dei sunt ipse Deus*, "The decrees of God are God himself." See Elisha Coles advancing at the head of thousands of his admirers, and hear how he exhorts them to worship: "Let us make election our all; our bread, water, munition of rocks, and whatever else we can suppose ourselves to want;"—that is, Let us make the great image our God. Ye candid Meshechs, ye considerate Abednegos, follow not this mistaken multitude. Before you cry with them, "Great is the Diana of the Calvinists!," walk once around the celebrated image; and I am persuaded that if you can make out *Free Grace* written in running hand upon her smiling face, you will see *Free Wrath* written in black capitals upon her deformed back; and then, far from being angry at the liberty I take to expose her, you will wish speed to the "little stone" which I level at her "iron-clay feet."

Think not, honoured Sir, that I say about *free wrath* what I cannot possibly prove: For you help me yourself to a striking demonstration. I suppose you are still upon your travels. You come to the borders of a great empire; and the first thing that strikes you, is a man in an easy

carriage, going with folded arms to take possession of an immense estate, freely given him by the king of the country. As he flies along, you just make out the motto of the royal chariot in which he dozes, FREE REWARD. Soon after you meet five of the king's carts, containing twenty wretches loaded with irons; and the motto of every cart is, FREE PUNISHMENT. You inquire into the meaning of this extraordinary procession, and the sheriff, attending the execution, answers: "Know, curious stranger, that our monarch is *absolute*; and to show that *sovereignty* is the prerogative of his imperial crown, and that he is no *respecter of persons*, he distributes every day *free rewards* and *free punishments* to a certain number of his subjects."—"What! without any regard to merit or demerit, by mere caprice?"—"Not altogether so, for he *pitches upon the worst of men, and chief of sinners, and upon such to choose*, for the subjects of his rewards. (Elisha Coles, page 62.) And that his punishment may do as much honour to *free, sovereign wrath*, as his bounty does to *free, sovereign grace*, he pitches upon those that shall be executed before they are born."—"What! have these poor creatures in chains done no harm?"—"O yes," says the sheriff, "the king contrived that their parents should let them fall, and break their legs, before they had any knowledge: When they came to years of discretion, he commanded them to run a race with broken legs; and because they cannot do it, I am going to see them quartered. Some of them, besides this, have been obliged to fulfil the king's *secret will, and bring about his purposes*; and they shall be burned in yonder deep valley, called *Tophet*, for their trouble."

You are shocked at the sheriff's account, and begin to expostulate with him about the *freeness* of the *wrath* which burns a man for doing the king's will; but all the answer you can get from

him is, that which you give me in your fourth letter, (page 23,) where, speaking of a poor reprobate, you say, "Such an one is indeed accomplishing" the king's, you say, "God's decree; but he carries a dreadful mark in his forehead that such a deeree is, that he shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" of the country. You cry out, "God deliver me from the hands of a monarch, who *punishes with everlasting destruction* such as accomplish his deeree!" And while the magistrate intimates, that your exclamation is a *dreadful mark*, if not *in your forehead*, at least upon your *tongue*, that you yourself shall be apprehended against the next execution, and made a public instance of the king's free wrath, your blood runs cold, you bid the postilion turn the horses; they gallop for your life, and the moment you get out of the dreary land, you bless God for your narrow escape.

May reason and Scripture draw your soul with equal speed from the dismal fields of Coles's *Sovereignty*, to the smiling plains of primitive Christianity! Here you have God's *election*, without Calvin's *reprobation*. Here Christ chooses the Jews, without rejecting the Gentiles; and elects Peter, James, and John, to the enjoyment of peculiar privileges, without reprobating Matthew, Thomas, and Simon. Here, nobody is damned for not doing impossibilities, or for doing what he could not possibly help. Here, all that are saved enjoy rewards, through the merits of Christ, according to the degrees of evangelical obedience which the Lord enables, not forces, them to perform. Here *free wrath* never appeared: All our damnation is of ourselves, when we "neglect such great salvation," by obstinately refusing to "work it out with fear and trembling." But this is not all; here *free grace* does not rejoice over *stocks*, but over *men*, who gladly confess that their salvation is all of

God, who, for Christ's sake, rectifies their free-agency, helps their infirmities, and "works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And from the tenor of the Scripture, as well as from the consent of all nations, and the dictates of conscience, it appears, that part of God's "good pleasure" towards man is, that he shall remain invested with the awful power of choosing life or death, that his will shall never be forced, and, consequently, that overbearing, irresistible grace shall be banished to the land of Coles's *Sovereignty*, together with free, absolute, unavoidable wrath.

Now, honoured Sir, permit me to ask, Why does this doctrine alarm good men? Why are those Divines deemed heretics, who dare not divest God of his essential love, Emmanuel of his compassionate humanity, and man of his connatural free-agency? What are Dominicus and Calvin, when weighed in the balance against Moses and Jesus Christ? Hear the great Prophet of the Jews: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing," heaven and hell; "therefore choose life that ye may live." And "he that hath ears" not yet absolutely stopped by prejudice, "let him hear" what the great Prophet of the Christians says upon the important question: "I am come that they might have life;—all things are now ready,—but ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.—I would have gathered you, and ye would not.—Because I have called and ye refused, I will laugh when your destruction cometh." "For they did not choose the fear of the Lord, therefore they shall eat," not "the fruit" of my decree, or of Adam's sin, but "of their own" perverse "way: They shall be filled with their own doings."

If these words of Moses and Jesus Christ are overlooked, should not, at least, the experience of

near six thousand years teach the world, that God does not force rational beings, and that when he tries their loyalty, he does not obey for them, but gives them sufficient grace to obey for themselves? Had not all the angels sufficient grace to obey? If some kept not their first estate, was it not through their own unfaithfulness? What evil has our Creator done us, or what service have devils rendered us, that we should fix the blot of Calvinian reprobation upon the former, to excuse the rebellion of the latter? Did not Adam and Eve stand some time by means of God's sufficient grace, and might they not have stood for ever? Have not unconverted men sufficient grace to forsake or complain of some evil? to perform, or attempt some good? Had not David sufficient grace to avoid the crimes into which he plunged? Have not believers sufficient power to do more good than they do? And does not the Scripture address sinners, (Simon Magus not excepted,) as having sufficient grace to pray for more grace, if they have not yet sinned the sin unto death?

In opposition to the above-stated doctrine of *grace free for all*, as well as *free in all*, our Calvinian brethren assert, that God binds his free grace, and keeps it from visiting millions of sinners, whom they call reprobates.—They teach that man is not in a state of probation, that his lot is absolutely cast, a certain little number of souls being immovably fixed in God's favour, in the midst of all their abominations; and a certain vast number under his eternal wrath, in the midst of their most sincere endeavours to secure his favour. And their teachers maintain that the names of the former were “written in the book of life,” without any respect to foreseen repentance, faith, and obedience; while the names of the latter were put in the book of death, (so I call the decree of reprobation,) merely for the sin of Adam, without any regard to

personal impenitency, unbelief, and disobedience. And this *narrow grace* and *free wrath* they recommend to the world, under the engaging name of *free grace*.

This doctrine, dear Sir, we are in conscience bound to oppose, not only because it is the reverse of the other, which is both scriptural and rational; but because it is inseparably connected with doctrinal Antinomianism, as your Fourth Letter abundantly demonstrates; and above all, because it appears to us, that it fixes a blot upon all the divine perfections. Please, honoured Sir, to consider the following queries:—

What becomes of God's *goodness*, if the tokens of it which he gives to millions, be only intended to enhance their ruin, or cast a deceitful veil over his everlasting wrath?—What becomes of his *mercy*, which is “over all his works,” if millions were for ever excluded from the least interest in it, by an absolute decree that constitutes them “vessels of wrath” from all eternity?—What becomes of his *justice*, if he sentences myriads upon myriads to everlasting fire, “because they have not believed on the name of his only-begotten Son;” when, if they had believed that he was their Jesus, their Saviour, they would have believed a monstrous lie, and claimed what they have no more right to than I have to the crown of England?—What becomes of his *veracity*, and the *oath he swears*, that “he willeth not the death of a sinner,” if he never affords most sinners sufficient means of escaping eternal death? if he sends his ambassadors to every creature, declaring that “all things are now ready” for their salvation, when nothing but “Tophet is prepared of old” for the inevitable destruction of a vast majority of them?—What becomes of his *holiness*, if, in order to condemn the reprobates with some show of justice, and secure the end of his decree of reprobation, which is that “millions

shall absolutely be damned," he absolutely fixes *the means* of their damnation, that is, their sins and wickedness?—What becomes of his *wisdom*, if he seriously expostulates with souls as dead as corpses, and gravely urges to repentance and faith, persons that can no more repent and believe, than fishes can speak and sing?—What becomes of his *long-suffering*, if he waits to have an opportunity of sending the reprobates into a deeper hell, and not to give them a longer time to "save themselves from this perverse generation?"—What of his *equity*, if there was mercy for Adam and Eve, who, *personally* breaking the edge of duty, wantonly rushed out of Paradise into this howling wilderness; and yet there is no mercy for millions of their unfortunate children, who are born in a state of sin and misery, without any *personal* choice, and consequently without any *personal* sin?—And what becomes of his *omniscience*, if he cannot foreknow future contingencies? if to foretel without a mistake that such a thing shall happen, he must do it himself? Was not Nero as wise in this respect? Could not he foretel that Phebe should not continue a virgin, when he was bent upon ravishing her? that Seneca should not die a natural death, when he had determined to have him murdered? and that Crispus should fall into a pit, if he obliged him to run a race at midnight in a place full of pits? And what old woman in the kingdom cannot precisely foretel that a silly tale shall be told at such an hour, if she is resolved to tell it herself, or, at any rate, to engage a child to do it for her?

Again: What becomes of God's *loving-kindness*, "which has been ever of old" towards the children of men? And what of his *impartiality*, if most men, absolutely reprobated for the sin of Adam, are never placed in a state of personal trial and probation? Does not God use them far less kindly

than devils, who were tried every one for himself, and remain in their diabolical state, because they brought it upon themselves by a *personal* choice? Astonishing! that the Son of God should have been flesh of the flesh, and bone of the bone, of millions of men, whom, upon the Calvinian scheme, he never indulged so far as he did devils! What a hard-hearted relation to myriads of his fellow-men, does Calvin represent our Lord! Suppose Satan had become our *kinsman* by incarnation, and had by that means got "the right of redemption;" would he not have acted like himself, if he had not only left the majority of them in the depth of the fall, but enhanced their misery by the sight of his partiality to the little flock of the elect?

Once more: What becomes of *fair dealing*, if God everywhere represents sin as the dreadful evil which causes damnation, and yet the most horrid sins "work for good" to some, and, as you intimate, "accomplish their salvation through Christ?" — And what of *honesty*, if the God of truth himself promises that "all the families of the earth shall be blessed in Christ," when he has cursed a vast majority of them, with a decree of absolute reprobation, which excludes them from obtaining an interest in him, even from the foundation of the world?

Nay, what becomes of his *sovereignty* itself, if it be torn from the mild and gracious attributes by which it is tempered? if it be held forth in such a light as renders it more terrible to millions, than the sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar, in the plain of Dura, appeared to Daniel's companions, when "the form of his visage was changed against them," and he decreed that they should be "cast into the burning fiery furnace?" for they might have saved their bodily lives by bowing to the golden image, which was a thing in their power. But poor reprobates can escape at no rate: The horrible decree

is gone forth ; they must, in spite of their best endeavours, "dwell," body and soul, "with everlasting burnings."

And let none say that we wrong the Calvinian decree of reprobation, when we call it an horrible decree ; for Calvin himself is honest enough to call it so. "*Unde factum est, tot gentes, una cum liberis eorum infantibus æternæ morti involveret lapsus Adæ absque remedio, nisi quia Deo ita visum est?* DECRETUM QUIDEM HORRIBILE, fateor ; *inficiari tamen nemo poterit, quin præsciverit Deus quem exitum habiturus esset homo, antequam ipsum conderet, et ideo præsciverit quia decreto suo sic ordinurat.*" That is, "How comes it to pass that so many nations, together with their infant children, are by the fall of Adam involved in eternal death without remedy, unless it is because God would have it so ?—A horrible decree, I confess ! Nevertheless, nobody can deny that God foreknew what would be man's end before he created him, and that he foreknew it because he had ordered it by his decree." (Calv. Inst., Book iii, Chap. 23, Sect. 7.)

This is some of the contempt which Calvinism pours upon God's perfections : These are some of the blots which it fixes upon his word. But the moment man is considered as a candidate for heaven, a probationer for a blissful immortality ;—the moment you allow him what *free grace* bestows upon him, that is, "a day of salvation," with "a talent" of living light and rectified free-agency, to enable him to *work for life* faithfully promised, as well as *from life* freely imparted ;—the moment, I say, you allow this, all the divine perfections shine with unsullied lustre ; and as reason and majesty returned to Nebuchadnezzar after his shameful degradation, so consistency and native dignity are restored to the abused oracles of God.

Having thus shown the inconsistency of Calvin-

ism, and the reasonableness of what you call the Wesleyan, and what we esteem the Christian, orthodoxy, (so far at least as it respects the gracious power and opportunity that man, as redeemed and prevented by Christ, has to *work for life*, or to "work out his own salvation,") it is but just I should consider some of the most plausible objections which are urged against our doctrine.

FIRST OBJECTION.—"Your Wesleyan scheme pours more contempt upon the divine perfections than ours. What becomes of God's *wisdom*, if he gave his Son to die for all mankind, when he foreknew that most men would never be benefited by his death?"

ANSWER 1.—God foreknew just the contrary: All men, even those who perish, are benefited by Christ's death; for all enjoy through him a "day of salvation;" and a thousand blessings both spiritual and temporal; and if all do not enjoy heaven for ever, they may still thank God for his gracious offer, and take the blame upon themselves for their obstinate refusal of it.—2. God, by re-instating all mankind in a state of probation, for ever shuts the mouths of those who choose "death in the error of their ways," and clears himself of their blood before men and angels. If he cannot eternally benefit unbelievers, he eternally vindicates his own adorable perfections. He can say to the most obstinate of all the reprobates, "'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: In me was thy help; but thou wouldest not come unto me that thou mightest have life.' Thy destruction is not from *my decree*, but *thine own determination*."

SECOND OBJECTION.—"If God wills all men to be saved, and yet many are damned, is he not disappointed? And does not this disappointment argue that he wants either wisdom to contrive the means of some men's salvation, or power to execute his gracious design?"

ANSWER.—1. God's purpose is, that all men should have sufficient grace to believe according to their dispensation ; that “ he who believeth shall be saved, and he who believeth not shall be damned.” God cannot, therefore, be disappointed, even when man's free agency throws in the weight of final unbelief, and turns the scale of probation for death.—2. Although Christ is the author of “ a day of salvation ” to all, yet he is “ the author of eternal salvation ” to none but such as “ obey him,” by “ working out their own salvation ” while it is day.

If you say, that “ suppose God wills the salvation of *all*, and none can be saved but *the obedient*, he should make all obey :”—I reply, So he does, by a variety of gracious means, which persuade, but do not force them ; for he says himself, “ What could I have done more to my vineyard than I have done ? ”—“ O, but he should *force* all by the sovereign power of irresistible grace.” You might as well say that he should renounce his wisdom, and defeat his own purpose : For if his wisdom places men in a state of probation ; the moment he forces them, he takes them out of that state, and overturns his own counsel ; he destroys the work of his hands ; he unmans man, and saves him not as a rational creature, but as a stock or a stone. Add to this, that *forced obedience* is a contradiction in terms ; it is but another word for *disobedience* ; at least in the account of Him who says, “ My son, give me thy heart ;” obey me with an unconstrained, free, and cheerful will. In a word, this many “ are willingly ignorant of,” that when God says he “ wills all men to be saved,” he wills them to be saved as *men*, according to his own method of salvation laid down in the above-mentioned Scriptures, and not in their own way of wilful disobedience, or after Calvin's scheme of irresistible grace.

THIRD OBJECTION.—“ You may speak against *irresistible grace*, but we are persuaded that nothing short of it is sufficient to make us believe ; for St. John informs us, that the Jews, towards whom it was not exerted, *could not believe*.”

ANSWER.—1. Joseph said to his mistress, “ How can I do this great wickedness ? ” But this does not prove that he was not able to comply with her request, if he had been so minded. The truth was, that some of the Pharisees had “ buried their talent,” and therefore could not improve it ; while others had so provoked God, that he had “ taken it from them ;” they had “ sinned unto death.” But most of them obstinately held that evil, which was an insurmountable hinderance to faith ; and to them our Lord said, “ How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another ? ”—2. I wonder that modern Predestinarians should make so much of this scripture, when Augustine, their father, solves the seeming difficulty with the utmost readiness. “ If you ask me,” says he, “ why the Jews could not believe ; I quickly answer, Because they would not ; for God foresaw their evil will, and foretold it by the Prophet ; and if he blinded their eyes, their own wills deserved this also.” They obstinately said, “ We will not see,” and God justly said at last, “ Ye shall not see.”

FOURTH OBJECTION.—“ You frequently mention the parable of the *talents*, but take care to say nothing of the parable of the *dry bones*, which shows not only the absurdity of supposing that men can work for life, but the propriety of expositing with souls as void of all spiritual life, as the dry bones to which Ezekiel prophesied.”

ANSWER.—1. If you read that parable without comment, you will see that it is not descriptive of the spiritual state of souls, but of the political condition of the Jews during their captivity in Babylon. They were scattered throughout Chaldea as

dry bones in a valley ; nor was there any human probability of their being collected to form again a political body. Therefore, God, to cheer their desponding hearts, favoured Ezekiel with the vision of the resurrection of the dry bones.—2. This vision proves just the reverse of what some imagine. For the dry bones are thus described by the Lord himself : “ These bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say,” this was the language of their despairing minds, “ Our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts.” Here these Israelites, (compared to dry bones,) even before Ezekiel prophesied, and the Spirit entered into them, knew their misery, and complained of it, saying, “ Our bones are dried up.” How far, then, were they from being as insensible as corpses ?—3. The propheey to the dry bones did not consist in threatenings and exhortations ; it was only of the declarative kind. Nor was the promise of their resurrection fulfilled in the Calvinian way, that is, *irresistibly*. For although God had said, “ I will open your graves,” that is, your prisons, “ and will bring you out of them into your own land,” we find that multitudes, when their graves were opened, chose to continue in them. For when Nehemiah and Ezra breathed, under God, courage into the dry bones, the Jewish captives dispersed throughout Chaldea, many preferred the land of their captivity to their own land, and refused to return ; so that, after all, their political resurrection turned upon their own choice.

FIFTH OBJECTION.—“ We do not altogether go by the parable of the dry bones, when we affirm there is no absurdity in preaching to souls as dead as corpses. We have the example of our Lord as well as that of Ezekiel. Did he not say to Lazarus when he was dead and buried, *Come forth?*”

ANSWER.—If Christ had called Lazarus out of the grave without giving him power to come forth,

his friends would have had some reason to suspect that he was beside himself. How much more, if they had heard him call a thousand corpses out of their graves, denouncing to all, that if they did not rise they would *be cast into a lake of fire*, and eaten up by *a worm that dieth not!* It is a matter of fact, that Christ never commanded but one dead man to come out of the grave; and the instant he gave him the command, he gave him also power to obey it. Hence we conclude, that as the Lord "commands all men everywhere to repent," he gives them all power so to do. But some Calvinists argue just the reverse: "Christ," say they, "called one corpse, without using any entreaty, threatening, or promise, and he gave it power to obey; therefore, when he calls a hundred dead souls, and enforces his call with the greatest variety of expostulations, threatenings, and promises, he gives power to obey only to two or three." What an inference is this! How worthy of the cause which it supports!

In how contemptible a light does our Lord appear, if he says to souls as dead as Lazarus in the grave, "All the day long have I stretched out my hands unto you!—Turn ye; why will ye die?—Let the wicked forsake his way, and I will have mercy upon him: But if he will not turn, I will whet my sword; I have bent my bow and made it ready; I have also prepared for him the instruments of death!"

I once saw a passionate man unmercifully beating and damning a blind horse, because he did not take to the way in which he would have him go; and I came up just when the poor animal fell a lamed victim to its driver's madness. How did I upbraid him with his cruelty, and charge him with unparalleled extravagance! But I now ask, if it is not more than paralleled by the conduct of the imaginary being, whom some recommend to the

world as a wise and merciful God ? For the besotted driver for some minutes expostulated, in his way, with a *living*, though blind horse ; but the supposed maker of the Calvinian decrees expostulates *all the day long* with souls not only as blind as beetles, but as dead as corpses. Again, the former had some hopes of prevailing with his living beast to turn ; but what hopes can the latter have to prevail with dead corpses, or with souls as dead as they ? What man in his senses ever attempted to make a corpse *turn*, by threatening it sword in hand, or by bending the bow and levelling an arrow at its cold and putrid heart ?

But suppose the resurrection of Lazarus, and that of the dry bones, did not overthrow Calvinism, would it be reasonable to lay so much stress upon them ? Is a dead soul in every respect like a dead body ? And is *moral* death absolutely like *natural* death ? Can a parabolical vision, wrested from its obvious meaning, supersede the plainest declarations of Christ, who personally addresses sinners as free agents ? Should not metaphors, comparisons, and parables, be suffered to walk erect like reasonable men ? Is it right to make them go upon all four like the stupid ox ? What loads of heterodoxy have degraded parables brought into the Church ! And how successfully has error carried on her trade, by dealing in figurative expressions taken in a literal sense !

“ This is my body,” says Christ. “ Therefore bread is flesh,” says the Papist, “ and transubstantiation is true.” “ These dry bones are the house of Israel,” says the Lord : “ Therefore Calvinism is true,” says my objector ; “ and we can do no more towards our conversion, than dry bones towards their resurrection.” *Lost sinners* are represented in the Gospel as a *lost piece of silver*. “ Therefore,” says the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*, “ they can no more seek God, than the piece could seek the

woman who lost it."—"Christ is the Son of God," says St. Peter: "Therefore," says Arius, "he is not co-eternal with the Father, for I am not so old as my parents."—And I, who have a right to be as wise as any of them, hearing our Lord say that the "seven churches are seven candlesticks," prove by it that the seven churches can no more repent, than three pair and a half of candlesticks, or, if you please, seven pair of snuffers. And shall we pretend to overthrow the general tenor of the Scripture by such conclusions as these? Shall not rather unprejudiced persons of every denomination agree to turn such arguments out of the Christian Church, with as much indignation as Christ turned the oxen out of the Jewish temple?

Permit me, honoured Sir, to give you two or three instances more, of an undue stretching of some particular words, for the support of some Calvinian errors. According to the Oriental style, a follower of wisdom is called "a son of wisdom;" and one that deviates from her paths, "a son of folly." By the same mode of speech, a wicked man, considered as wicked, is called "Satan, a son of Belial, a child of the wicked one, and a child of the devil." On the other hand, a man who turns from the devil's works, and does the works of God, by believing in him, is called "a child, or a son of God." Hence, the passing from the ways of Satan to the ways of God, was naturally called *conversion*, and a *new birth*, as implying a turning from sin, a passing into the family of God, and being numbered among the godly.

Hence some Divines, who, like Nicodemus, carnalize the expressions of *new birth*, *child of God*, and *son of God*, assert, that if men who once walked in God's ways, turn back even into adultery, murder, and incest, they are still God's *dear people*, and *pleasant children*, in the Gospel sense of the words. They ask, "Can a man be a child of God to-day,

and a child of the devil to-morrow? Can he be born this week, and unborn the next?" And with these questions they as much think they have overthrown the doctrine of holiness, and one half of the Bible, as honest Nicodemus supposed he had demolished the doctrine of regeneration, and stopped our Lord's mouth, when he said, "Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

The questions of our brethren would be easily answered, if, setting aside the oriental mode of speech, they simply asked, "May one who has 'ceased to do evil, and learned to do well *to-day*, cease to do well, and learn to do evil' *to-morrow*?" To this we could directly reply: If the dying thief, the Philippian jailor, and multitudes of Jews, in one day went over from the sons of folly to the sons of wisdom, where is the absurdity of saying they could measure the same way back again in one day; and draw back into the horrid womb of sin as easily as Satan drew back into rebellion, Adam into disobedience, David into adultery, Solomon into idolatry, Judas into treason, and Ananias and Sapphira into covetousness? When Peter had shown himself a blessed son of heavenly wisdom, by confessing Jesus Christ, did he even stay till the next day to become a son of folly, by following the "wisdom which is earthly, sensual, and devilish?" Was not our Lord directly obliged to rebuke him with the utmost severity, by saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan?"

Multitudes, who live in open sin, build their hopes of heaven upon a similar mistake; I mean upon the unscriptural idea which they fix to the scriptural word *sheep*. "Once I heard the Shepherd's voice," says one of these Laodicean souls; "I followed him, and therefore I was one of his sheep; and now, though I follow the voice of a stranger, who leads me into all manner of sins, into adultery and murder, I am undoubtedly a

sheep still; for it was never heard that a sheep became a goat." Such persons do not observe, that our Lord calls "sheep," *those who hear his voice*, and "goats," *those who follow that of the tempter*. Nor do they consider that if Saul, a grievous wolf, "breathing slaughter" against Christ's sheep, and "making havoc" of his little flock, could, in a short time, be changed both into a sheep and a shepherd; David, an harmless sheep, could, in as short a time, commence a goat with Bathsheba, and prove a wolf in sheep's clothing to her husband.

Pardon me, honoured Sir, if, to make my mistaken brethren ashamed of their argument, I dedicate to them the following soliloquy, wherein I reason upon their own plan:—

" Those very Jews whom the Baptist and our Lord called a 'brood of vipers and serpents,' were soon after compared to 'chickens,' which Christ wanted to 'gather as a hen does her brood.' What a wonderful change was here! The *vipers* became *chickens*! Now, as it was never heard that chickens became vipers, I conclude that those Jews, even when they came about our Lord like 'fat bulls of Bashan,' like 'ramping and roaring lions,' were true chickens still. And, indeed, why should not they have been as true chickens as David was a true sheep when he murdered Uriah? I abhor the doctrine which maintains that a man may be a chicken or a sheep to-day, and a viper or a goat to-morrow.

" But I am a little embarrassed. If none go to hell but *goats*, and none to heaven but *sheep*, where shall the *chickens* go? where the *wolves in sheep's clothing*? And in what *limbus* of heaven or hell shall we put that 'fox Herod,' the *dogs* who 'return to their vomit,' and the *swine*, before whom we must 'not cast our pearls?' Are they all species of goats, or some particular kind of sheep?

" My difficulties increase. The Church is called *a dove*, and Ephraim *a silly dove*. Shall the *silly dove* be admitted among the sheep? Her case seems rather doubtful. The hair of the spouse in the Canticles is likewise said to be like a 'flock of goats,' and Christ's shepherds are represented as 'feeding kids,' or 'young goats, beside their tents.' I wonder if those *young goats* became young sheep, or if they were all doomed to continue reprobates! But what puzzles me most is, that the Babylonians are in the same verse compared to *lambs*, *rams*, and *goats*: Were they mongrel elect, or mongrel reprobates, or some of Elisha Coles's *spiritual monsters*?"

I make this ridiculous soliloquy to show the absurdity and danger of resting weighty doctrines upon so sandy a foundation, as the particular sense, which some good men give to a few scriptural expressions, stretched and abused on the rack of my countryman, Calvin; especially such expressions as these, "a child of God, a sheep, a goat," and, above all, the "dead in sin."

Upon this last expression you seem, honoured Sir, chiefly to place the merit of your cause, with respect to "working for life;" witness the following words:—"That we are to work for life, is an assertion most exceedingly self-contradictory, if it be a truth that man is 'dead in trespasses and sins.'" Had you given yourself the trouble of reading, with any degree of attention, the forty-second page of the Vindication,\* you would have seen your difficulty proposed and solved. Witness the following words, which conclude the solution:—"In this scriptural view of free grace, what room is there for the ridiculous cavil that Mr. W. wants the *dead to work for life?*" Had I been in your place, I confess, honoured Sir, I could not have

\* First Check, page 45.

produced that cavil again, without attempting, at least, to wipe off the ridicule put upon it. I should think truth has better weapons with which to defend herself than *a veil*. I grant that the Reverend Divine, whose second you are, has publicly *cast a veil* over all my arguments, under the name of *mistakes*: But could you possibly think, that his veil was thick enough to cover them from the eyes of unprejudiced readers, and palliate your answering, or seeming to answer me, without taking notice of my arguments? But if you cast a veil over them, I shall now endeavour to do yours justice, and clear the matter a little farther.

1. Availing yourself of St. Paul's words to the Ephesians and Colossians, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; and you, being dead in your sins, hath he quickened together with him;" you will dwell upon the absurdity of "expecting living actions from a dead corpse," or living works from a dead soul.

1. I wonder at the partiality of some persons: If we assert that "strong believers are *dead to sin*," they tell us very properly that such are not so dead but they may commit sin if they please, or if they are off their watch. But if we say that "many, who are *dead in sin*, are not so dead, but in the strength imparted, together with the light that enlightens every man, they may leave off some of their sins if they please," we are exclaimed against as using metaphysical distinctions, and DEAD must absolutely mean *impotent as a corpse*.

2. The word *dead*, &c., is frequently used in the Scriptures to denote a particular degree of helplessness and inactivity, very short of the total helplessness of a corpse. We read of the *deadness* of Sarah's womb, and of Abraham's body being *dead*; and he must be a strong Calvinist indeed, who, from such expressions, peremptorily asserts, that Sarah's *dead* womb was as unfit for conception, and

Abraham's *dead* body for generation, as if they both had been "dead corpses." Christ writes to the Church of Sardis: "I know thy works; thou hast a name to live, and art dead :" But it is evident, that, dead as they were, something remained alive in them, though, like the smoking flax, it was "ready to die." Witness the words that follow: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." Now, Sir, if the dead Sardians could *work for life* by "strengthening the things" belonging to the Christian "which remained" in them; is it modest to decide è *cathedra* that the dead Ephesians and Colossians could not as well work for life, by "strengthening the things that remained and were ready to die," under *their own dispensation*? Is it not evident that a beam of "the Light of the world" still shone in their hearts, or that the Spirit still strove with them? If they had absolutely quenched him, would he have helped them to believe? And if they had not, was not there something of "the Light which enlightens every man" remaining in them; with which they both could, and did, work for life, as well as the dead Sardians?

3. The absurdity of always measuring the meaning of the word *dead*, by the idea of a *dead corpse*, appears from several other scriptures. St. Paul says, speaking of one who grows wanton against Christ, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." Now, if this means that she is entirely devoid of every degree of spiritual life, what becomes of Calvinism? Suppose all that live in pleasure are as dead to God as corpses, what became of the everlasting life of Lot, when he lived in pleasure with his daughters? of David with Bathsheba, and Solomon with his idolatrous wives? When the same Apostle observes to the Romans, that their "body was dead because of sin," did he really mean they were already *dead corpses*? And

when he adds, "sin revived, and I died," did Calvinian death really pass upon him? Dead as he was, could not he complain like the dry bones, and ask, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Again: When our Lord says to Martha, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live," does he not intimate that there is a work consistent with the degree of death of which he speaks? a believing out of death into life? a doing the work of God for life, yea, for eternal life?

4. From these and the like scriptures it is evident, that there are different degrees of spiritual death, which you perpetually confound. (1.) Total death, or a full departure of the Holy Spirit. This passed upon Adam, and all mankind in him, when he lost God's moral image, fell into selfish nature, and was buried in sin, guilt, shame, and horror. (2.) Death freely visited with a seed of life in our fallen representative, and of course in all his posterity, during the day of their visitation. (3.) Death oppressing this living seed, and holding it "in unrighteousness," which was the death of the Ephesians and Colossians. (4.) Death prevailing again over the living seed, after it had been powerfully quickened, and burying it in sin and wickedness. This was the death of David during his apostasy, and is still that of all who once believed, but now live in Laodicean ease or Sardian pleasure. And, (5.) The death of confirmed apostates, who, by absolutely quenching "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," the second Adam, are fallen into the miserable state of nature, and total helplessness, in which the first Adam was, when God preached to him the Gospel of his quickening grace. These are said by St. Jude to be *twice dead*; dead by Adam's total apostasy from God, and dead by their own personal and final apostasy from "the Light of the world."

II. The foundation of the Crispian Babel is

literally laid in confusion. When you have confounded all the degrees of spiritual death, we may naturally expect to see you confound all the degrees of spiritual life, which our Lord meant when he said, "I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." "All that are quickened," do you say, "are pardoned and justified." As if a man could not be quickened to see his sins and reform, before he is quickened so to believe in Christ as to receive the pardon and justification mentioned Col. ii. 13, and Rom. v. 1.

If you read the Scriptures without prejudice, you will see that there are several degrees of spiritual life, or quickening power. 1. The living "Light," which "shines in the darkness" of every man during the day of his visitation. 2. The life of the returning sinner, whether he has always lived in open sin as the Publican, or once walked in the ways of God as David. 3. The life of the Heathen, who, like Cornelius, "fears God and works righteousness" according to his light, and is accepted in his dispensation. 4. The life of the pious Jew, who, like Samuel, fears God from his youth. This degree of life is far superior to the preceding, being cherished by the traditions of the Patriarchs, the books of the Old Testament, the Sacraments, Priests, Prophets, Temple, Sabbaths, Sacrifices, and other means of grace belonging to the Jewish economy. 5. The life of the feeble Christian, or disciple of John, who is "baptized with water unto repentance for the remission of sins," and believing in "the Lamb of God," immediately pointed out to him, enjoys the blessings of the primitive Christians before the day of Pentecost. And, 6. The still more abundant life, the life of the adult or perfect Christian, imparted to him when the love of God, or power from on high, is plentifully shed abroad in his believing soul, on the day that Christ "baptizes him with the Holy

Ghost and with fire," to "sanctify him wholly, and seal him unto the day of redemption."

III. When you have overlooked all the degrees of spiritual death and life, what wonder is it that you should confound all the degrees of acceptance and divine favour, with which God blesses the children of men. Permit me, honoured Sir, to bring also this article of the Christian faith out of the Calvinian tower of Babel, where it has too long been detained.

1. I have already proved, that in consequence of the love of benevolence and pity, with which "God loved the world," and through the "propitiation" which Christ made "for the sins of the whole world, the free gift" of "an accepted time" and a "day of salvation came upon all men." In this sense they are all "accepted," and sent "to work in the vineyard of" their respective dispensations. This degree of acceptance, with the seed of light, life, and power that accompanies it, is certainly previous to any work; and in virtue of it infants and complete idiots go to heaven, "for of such is the kingdom of God." As they are not capable of burying or improving their talent of inferior acceptance, they are admitted with it to an inferior degree of glory.

2. While many abandoned Heathens, and those who follow their abominable ways, bury their talent to the last, and lose it, together with the degree of acceptance they once enjoyed in or through "the Beloved;" some, by improving it, are accepted in a higher manner, and like Cornelius receive tokens of increasing favour. The love of pity and benevolence which God bore them, is now mixed with some complacence and delight.

3. Faithful Jews, or those who are under their dispensation, improving a superior number of talents, are accepted in a superior manner, and, as a token of it, they are made "rulers over five cities;"

they partake of greater grace here, and greater glory hereafter.

4. John the Baptist and his disciples,—I mean, Christians who have not yet been “baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire,”—are yet more highly accepted; for John, and the souls who live up to the height of his dispensation, are “great in the sight” and favour “of the Lord.” They exceed all those who attain only to the perfection of inferior economies.

5. But those Christians who live in the kingdom of God, which was opened to believers on the day of Pentecost, whose hearts burn with his love, and flame with his glory, are accepted in a still higher degree; for our Lord informs us, that great as John himself was, “the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he;” and, as a token of superior acceptance, he shall be made a “ruler over ten cities: He shall enter more deeply “into the joy” and glory “of his Lord.”

Although *concurrence with grace given* is necessary, in order to these four last degrees of acceptance, none enjoys them but *in and through* “the Beloved;” for as his blood is the meritorious spring of all our pardons, so his Spirit is the inexhaustible fountain of all our graces. Nor are we less indebted to him for power to “be workers together with God” in the great business of our salvation, than for all the other wonders of his unmerited goodness and redeeming love.

Let nobody say that the doctrine of these degrees of acceptance is founded upon metaphysical distinctions, and exceeds the capacity of simple Christians; for a child of ten years old understands that he may be accepted to run a race, before he is accepted to receive the prize; and that a man may be accepted as a day-labourer, and not as a servant; be as a steward, and not as a child; as a friend, and not as a spouse. All these degrees of accept-

ance are very distinct, and the confusion of them evidently belongs to the Calvinian Babel.

IV. As we have considered three of the walls of your tower, it will not be amiss to cast a look upon the fourth, which is the utterly confounding of the four degrees that make up a glorified saint's eternal justification. 1. That which passes upon all infants universally, and is thus described by St. Paul:—"As by the offence of one, judgment came upon *all* men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon *all* men, unto" present "justification," from original sin, and future justification "of life;" upon their repenting, and "believing in the light," during "the day of their visitation." In consequence of this degree of justification, we may, without impeaching the veracity of God, say to every creature, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to reconcile them unto himself, not imputing to them" original sin unto eternal death, and blotting out their personal transgressions in the moment "they believe with a heart unto righteousness."

2. The justification consequent upon such believing is thus described by St. Paul:—This blessing of faith "imputed for righteousness" shall be ours, "if we believe on him that was raised from the dead for our justification.—We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law."—Therefore, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," &c.

3. The justification consequent upon bringing forth the fruit of a lively faith in the truths that belong to our dispensation; this justification is thus mentioned by St. James: "Rahab the harlot was justified by works.—Abraham our father was justified by works.—Ye see, then, how by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

And, 4. Final justification, thus asserted by our Lord and St. Paul : In the day of judgment “ by thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned.—Circumcision and uncircumcision avail nothing, but the keeping of the commandment ; for the doers of the law shall be justified.”\*

All these degrees of justification are equally merited by Christ. We do nothing in order to the *first*, because it finds us in a state of total death. Towards the *second*, we believe by the power freely given us in the first, and by the additional help of Christ’s word and the Spirit’s agency. We work by faith in order to the *third*. And we continue believing in Christ and working together with God, as we have opportunity, in order to the *fourth*.

The preaching distinctly these four degrees of a glorified saint’s justification, is attended with peculiar advantages. The first justification engages the sinner’s attention, encourages his hopes, and draws his heart by love.—The second wounds the self-righteous Pharisee, who works without believing ; while it binds up the heart of the returning publican, who has no plea but, “ God be merciful to me a sinner.” The third detects the hypocrisy and blasts the vain hopes of all Antinomians, who, instead of “ showing their faith by their works, deny” in works “ the Lord that bought them, and

\* These four degrees of a glorified saint’s justification are mentioned in the preceding Check, though not so distinctly as they are here. If, treating of our present justification by faith, and of justification by works in the day of judgment, I have called them “ our first and second justification,” it was not to exclude the other two, but to attack gradually reigning prejudice, and accommodate myself to the language of my honoured opponent, who called *justification in the day of judgment*, “ a second justification.” I should have been more exact at first : But I was so intent in demonstrating the *thing*, that I did not think then of contending for the most proper *name*. Nor did I see then of what importance it is, to drag the monster *Error* out of the den of *confusion* in which he hides himself.

put him to an open shame." And while the fourth makes even a Felix tremble, it causes believers to "pass the time of their sojourning here in" humble "fear" and cheerful watchfulness.

Though all these degrees of justification meet in glorified saints, we offer violence to Scripture, if we think, with Dr. Crisp, that they are inseparable. For all the wicked who "quench the" convincing "Spirit," and are finally given up to a reprobate mind, fall from the first, as well as Pharaoh. All who "receive the seed among thorns," all who do not "forgive their fellow-servants," all who "begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh," and all "who draw back," and become sons or daughters of "perdition," by falling from the third, lose the second, as Hymeneus, Philetus, and Demas. And none partake of the fourth, but those who "bear fruit unto perfection," according to one or another of the divine dispensations; "some" producing "thirty-fold," like Heathens, "some sixty-fold," like Jews, "and some an hundred-fold," like Christians.

From the whole it appears, that although we can absolutely do nothing towards our first justification, yet to say that neither faith nor works are required in order to the other three, is one of the boldest, most unscriptural, and most dangerous assertions in the world; which sets aside the best half of the Scriptures, and lets gross Antinomianism come in full tide upon the Church.

Having thus taken a view of the confusion in which Calvin and Crisp have laid the foundation of their schemes, I return to the arguments by which you support their mistakes.

I. "If you suppose," you say, "that there are any conditional works before justification, these works must either be the works of one who is in a state of nature, or in a state of grace, either condemned by the law, or absolved by the Gospel."

A new sophism this! No works are previous to justification from original sin, and to the quickening "light which enlightens every man that comes into the world." And the works that a penitent does in order to the subsequent justification, such as "ceasing to do evil, learning to do well," repenting, and persevering in obedient faith, are all done in a state of initial, progressive, or perfected grace: Not under the Adamic law, which did not admit of repentance, but under the Gospel of Christ, which says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, who will abundantly pardon" his sins, "cleanse him from all unrighteousness," and even "fill him with the fulness of God."

II. You proceed: "If a man in a state of nature do works in order to justification, they cannot please God, because he is in a state of utter enmity against him." What, Sir! do you think that a man "in a state of utter enmity against God" will do anything in order to recover his favour? When Adam was in that state, did he so much as once ask pardon? If he had, would he not have evidenced a desire of reconciliation, and, consequently, a degree of apostasy short of what you call *utter enmity*?

III. You quote Scripture: "He that does something in order to justification cannot please God, because he 'is alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart.'" An unhappy quotation this: For the Apostle did not speak these words of those honest Heathens, who, in obedience to "the Light of the world," did something in order to justification: But of those abandoned Pagans, who, as he observes in the next verse, "being past feeling," had "given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Thus, to prove that men have not a

talent of power to "work the works of God," you produce men who have buried it, that they might "work all uncleanness" without control, yea, "with greediness."

You would have avoided this mistake, if you had considered, that the Heathens mentioned there by St. Paul, were of the stamp of those whom he describes, Rom. i., and whom he represents as "given up" by God "to a reprobate mind, because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God," and "did not like to retain him in their knowledge." Here we may observe, 1. That those reprobate Heathens had once some knowledge of God, and of course some life; for "this is eternal life, to know God." 2. That if they were given up *because* they did not use that talent of divine knowledge, it was not because they were eternally and unconditionally reprobated; whence I beg leave to conclude, that if eternal unconditional reprobation is a mere chimera, so is likewise eternal unconditional election.

You might have objected with much more plausibility, that when the Ephesians were in the flesh they were "without hope, without Christ, and without God in the world;" And if you had, I would have replied, that these words cannot be taken in their full latitude, for the following reasons, which appear to me unanswerable:—1. The Ephesians, before their conversion, were not totally *without hope*, but without a *good* hope. They probably had as presumptuous a hope as David in Uriah's bed, or Agag when he thought the bitterness of death was past. 2. They were "without Christ," just as a man who has buried his talent is without it. But as he may dig it up, and use it, if he see his folly in time; so could, and so did, the Ephesians. 3. If they were in every sense "without Christ," what becomes of the doctrine maintained in your fourth letter, that they "were

for ever and for ever complete in Christ?" 4. They were not entirely "without God; for in him they lived, moved, and had their being;" nor were they without him as absolute reprobates, for they "knew the day of their visitation" before it was over. It remains then, that they were "without God," as the prodigal son was without his father, when "he fed swine in a far country;" and that they could and did return to their heavenly Father as well as he.

IV. You go on: "He who does something in order to justification, not being grafted in Christ, the true vine, cannot bring forth any good fruit; he can do nothing at all." I beg, Sir, you would produce one man who has not "sinned the sin unto death," that can absolutely do nothing, that cannot cease from one sin, and take up the practice of one duty: You will as soon find a saint in hell, as such a man upon earth. Even those who in their voluntary humility say perpetually, that "they can do nothing," refute their own doctrine by their very confessions; for he who confesses his helplessness, undoubtedly does something, unless by some new rule in logic it can be demonstrated, that confessing our impotence, and complaining of our misery, is "doing nothing."

When our Lord says, "Without me ye can do nothing," does he say that we are totally without him? When he declares, that "no man cometh unto him unless the Father draw him," does he insinuate that the Father does *not draw all*? or, that he draws *irresistibly*? or, that those who are drawn at one time, may not *draw back* at any other? Is it right to press Scripture into the service of a system, by straining its meaning so far beyond the import of the words?

Again: Though a man may not be "grafted in Christ," according to the Jewish or Christian dispensation, may he not partake of his quickening

sap, according to the more general dispensation of that "saving grace" which has "appeared to all men?" May not the branches in which that "saving grace appears" have some connexion with Christ, the heavenly vine, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, as well as Job and his friends, Melchisedee, Plato, the wise men, Cornelius, some of his soldiers, and many more who brought forth fruits according to their dispensation? Does not the first general justification so graft all men in him, that if they bear not fruit during their "accepted time," they are justly "taken away, cast forth, and burned" as barren branches?

V. Your knowledge of the Scripture made you foresee this answer, and to obviate it you say: "If you tell me that I mistake; that although we must cease from evil, repent, &c., yet you are far from supposing we can perform these things in our own natural strength; I ask, then, in whose strength are they performed? You say, in the strength of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, according to these scriptures: 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me, being strengthened with might in the inner man.'"

Permit me to tell you, honoured Sir, that I do not admire your quoting Scripture for me. You take care to keep out of sight the passages I have quoted, and to produce those which are foreign to the question. To show that even a sinful Heathen may work *for* as well as *from* life, I could never be so destitute of common sense as to urge the experience of St. Paul, "a father in Christ;" and that of the Ephesians, who were Christians "sealed unto the day of redemption."

To do justice to free grace, instead of the above-mentioned improper scriptures, you should have produced those which I have quoted in the Vindication:—Christ is "the Light of the world, which enlightens every man that cometh into the world:

—I am come that they might have life:—Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life:—The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men.” God’s “Spirit strives with man,” even with those who perish. “He commands all men everywhere to repent;” nor does he desire “to reap where has not sown.”

VI. Such scriptures as these would have been to the purpose; but I excuse your producing others; for if these had appeared, you would have raised more dust in six lines, than you could have laid in sixty pages; and every attentive reader would have detected the fallacy of your grand argument: “As soon may we expect living actions from a dead corpse; light out of darkness; sight out of blindness; love out of enmity; wisdom out of ignorance; fruit out of barrenness, &c. &c. &c., as look for any one good work or thought from a soul who is not” (in some degree) “quickened by the Holy Ghost, and who has not yet found favour with God:” So far at least as to be blessed with “a day of salvation,” and to be a partaker of “the free gift which is come upon all men.”

But, I pray, who is guilty of these absurdities? Who expects living actions from a dead corpse, &c. &c.? You, or we? You, who believe that the greatest part of mankind are left as graceless as devils, as helpless as corpses; and yet gravely go and preach to them repentance and faith, threatening them with an aggravated damnation if they do not turn? Or we, who believe that “Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man;” and that his “saving, quickening grace hath appeared unto all men?” Who puts foolish speeches in the mouth of the only wise God? You, who make him expostulate with souls as dead as corpses, and say, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life?” Or we, who assert, upon the testimony of the Holy Ghost, that God, by “working

in us both to will and to do," puts us again in a capacity of "working out our salvation with fear and trembling?" Will not our impartial readers see that the absurdity which you try to fix upon us falls at your own door; and, if your doctrine be true, at the door of the sanctuary itself?

VII. You pursue: "It is most clear that every soul who works in the strength of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, is already a pardoned and justified soul: He already has everlasting life." Here is some truth and some error; let us endeavour to separate them. Every soul who works in the strength of Christ's preventing grace, and by his Spirit "convincing the world of sin," is undoubtedly interested in the first degree of justification: He is justified from the guilt of original sin, and when he believes, from the guilt of his own actual sins; but it is absurd to suppose he is justified in the day of judgment, when that day is not yet come. He hath a seed of life, or else he could not work; but it is a doubt if this seed will take root: And in case it does, the heavenly plant of righteousness may be "choked by the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the desire of other things, and" by that means "become unfruitful."

As many barbarous mothers destroy the fruit of their womb, either before or after it comes to the birth, so many obstinate sinners obstruct the growth of the spiritual "seed" that "bruises the serpent's head;" and many flagrant apostates, in whose heart "Christ" was once "formed, crucify him afresh," and "quench the Spirit" of his grace. Hence the many miscarriages and apostasies, for which Elisha Coles is obliged to account thus:—There are "monsters in spirituals, in whom there is something begotten in their wills, by the common strivings and enlightenings of the Spirit, which attains to a kind of formality, but proves in the

end a lump of dead flesh." Surely the great Calvinian Divine was brought to a strait, when he thus fathered *formality* and *dead flesh* upon the Holy Ghost!

VIII. I follow you: "Therefore, all talk of working for life, and in order to find favour with God, is not less absurd, than if you were to suppose that a man could at the same moment be both condemned and absolved." What, Sir! may not a man be justly condemned, and yet graciously reprieved? Nay, may not the judge give him an opportunity to make the best of his reprieve, in order to get a full pardon and a place at court? At Geneva we think that the absurdity does not consist in asserting, but in denying it.—"Awake and asleep." What, Sir! is it an absurdity to think that a man may be in the same moment awake in one respect, and asleep in another? Does not St. Paul say, "Let us awake out of sleep?" But this is not all: Even in Geneva people can be drowsy; that is, half awake and half asleep.—"Dead and alive." I hope you will not fix the charge of absurdity upon Christ for saying that a certain man was left *half dead*, and of course *half alive*; and for exhorting the people of Sardis who were "dead," to "strengthen the things which remained and were ready to die;" nor yet upon St. Paul, for saying that the "*dead body*" of Abraham begat Isaac, and for speaking of a woman who was "*dead while she lived*."

IX. You go on and say that "it is as absurd to talk of working for life, as to assert that we can be at the same time loved and hated of God." But you forget, Sir, that there are a thousand degrees of love and hatred; and that, in the Scripture language, *loving less*, is called *hatting*: "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." "Except a man hate his father, &c., he cannot be my disciple." Yea, and we can without absurdity say, that we

love the same person in one respect, and hate her in another. I may love a woman as a neighbour, and yet loathe her in the capacity of a wife. And what absurdity is there in asserting, that while the day of grace lasts, God loves, and yet hates, an impenitent sinner? He loves him as his redeemed creature, yet hates him as his rebellious creature; or, in other terms, he loves him with a love of benevolence, but has no more love of complacence for him than for the devil himself.

X. You proceed: "To talk of working for life is not less absurd, than if you were to suppose that a man can be at the same moment one with Christ, by his Spirit dwelling in his heart, and yet not have redemption, peace, and reconciliation by the blood of his cross." Here is, if I mistake not, the language of Babel.

1. You confound the various degrees of redemption. Are not thousands of souls redeemed by the blood of Christ's cross, who are not yet redeemed by the power of his Spirit? May not every rebellious sinner out of hell say, "God redeemeth my life from destruction?" Is it not a degree of redemption to be kept out of hell, enjoying the good things of this life, and called to secure the blessings of the next? Did not Cain, Esau, Pharaoh, Saul, Judas, the five great reprobates, as some account them, enjoy this degree of redemption for many years? Have not believers a higher degree of "redemption, even the forgiveness of sins?" and do they not wait for the highest degree of it, even "the redemption of their body," when the trump of God will sound, and wake the dead? (Rom. viii. 23.)

2. As you confound all the degrees of redemption, so you do all the degrees of the "manifestation of the Spirit." He visits all, so as to strive with and reprove them, as he did mankind in the days of Noah; but this is no mark that their peace is

made, and a firm reconciliation brought about ; witness the deluge which God sent upon those with whom his Spirit had striven particularly one hundred and twenty years in the days of Noah. Again : Some have “the spirit of bondage unto fear ;” but this, far from being a sign that they have full reconciliation, is a divine consciousness that they have it not. And others have had the Spirit of adoption, and after having begun in him, so grieve or quench him, as to end in the flesh. But in the Calvinian Babel, these scriptural, experimental distinctions, are exploded as metaphysical, if not dreadfully heretical.

XI. You proceed : “ You will not assert that a soul who is ‘ quickened together with Christ,’ and in whom the Spirit of Jesus dwells by his gracious influences, can be in a state of enmity with God.” Still the same confounding of things which should be carefully distinguished ! May not a sinner “ be quickened ” by the seed of life, and yet “ hold it in unrighteousness ? ” May not a backslider “ crucify Christ afresh,” in “ the gracious influences of his Spirit ? ” And are not such persons “ in a state of enmity with God ? ” But if by a soul, “ quickened together with Christ, and in whom the Spirit of Jesus dwells,” you mean a believer completely “ baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire,” in whom He, that once visited as a Monitor, now fully resides as a Comforter ; you are right, the enmity ceases, the carnal mind and body of sin are destroyed, and “ God is all in all ” to that just man “ made perfect in love.”

XII. You add : “ If a man is not in a state of enmity, then he must be in a state of pardon and reconciliation.” What, Sir ! is there no medium between these extremes ? There is, as surely as the morning dawn intervenes between midnight and noonday. If the king say to some rebels, “ Lay down your arms, surrender, kiss my son, and you

shall be pardoned ; " the reconciliation on the king's part is undoubtedly begun. So far " was God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." But can it be said that the reconciliation is begun on the part of the rebels, who have not yet laid down any of their arms ? Does not the reconciliation gradually take place, as they gradually comply with the king's terms ? If they are long in coming to kiss the king's son, is not their full reconciliation suspended till they have fulfilled the last of the king's terms ? And, though the king made the overtures of the reconciliation, is there the least absurdity in saying, that they surrender, and kiss the son, in order to find reconciliation ? Nay, is it either sense or truth to assert, that they are absolutely to do nothing towards it ?

XIII. What you say about the Thirteenth Article of our Church is answered beforehand. (Third Check, p. 268.) But what follows deserves some notice : " Whenever God puts forth his quickening power upon a soul, it is in consequence of his having already taken that soul into covenant with himself, and having washed it white in the blood of the Lamb slain." This is very true, if you speak of the covenant of grace, which God made with our first parent and representative after the fall ; and of the washing of all mankind white in the blood of the Lamb from the guilt of original sin, so far as to remit the eternal punishment of it. But you are dreadfully mistaken, if you understand it of the three subsequent degrees of justification and salvation, which do not take place, but as we " work them out with fear and trembling," as God " works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

XIV. In the next page you ask some scriptural questions, which I shall scripturally answer : " What did the expiring thief do ? " Some hours before he died he obeyed this precept : " To-day, if you will

hear his voice, harden not your heart ; " he confessed his sin, and believed in Jesus. " What did Mary Magdalen do ? " She forsook her lovers and followed Jesus into Simon's house. " What Lydia ? " She " worshipped God, and resorted where prayer was wont to be made." " What the Philippian jailor ? " He ceased from attempting self-murder, and " falling at the Apostle's feet," inquired " what he must do to be saved." " What the serpent-bitten Israelites ? " They " looked at the brazen serpent ? " " What Paul himself ? " " For this cause I obtained mercy," says he, " because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Tim. i. 13.) But this was not all, for he " continued praying three days and three nights ; " and when Ananias came to him, he tarried no longer, but " arose and washed away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord." " What did the Corinthians do ? " They " heard and believed." (Acts xviii. 8.) " And what the Ephesians ? " They " trusted in Christ after that they heard the word of truth." (Eph. i. 13.)

XV. In the next paragraph (page 6, line 28,) you gravely propose the very objection which I have answered, (Third Check, p. 268,) without taking the least notice of my answer. And in the next page you advance one of Dr. Crisp's paradoxes : " Wherever God puts forth his power upon a soul, (and he does so wherever he visits it with even a touch of preventing grace,) pardon and reconciliation are already obtained by such a one. He shall never come into condemnation."

Young penitents, beware ! If you admit this tenet, you will probably stay in the " far country," vainly fancying you are in your " Father's house," because you have felt a desire to be there. Upon this scheme of doctrine, Lot's wife might have sat down at the gate of Sodom, concluding that because the angels had taken her by the hand, she was already in Zoar. A dangerous delusion this, against

which our Lord himself cautions us, by crying aloud, "*Remember Lot's wife?*"

I would take the liberty to expostulate with you, honoured Sir, about this paradox, if I had not some hope, that it is rather owing to the printer's mistake than your own. If you wrote in your manuscript, "Pardon is already obtained *for*," not *by*, such a one, we are agreed; for "Christ made upon the cross a sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." But what he procured *for* us is not obtained *by* us till the Holy Ghost makes the application by faith. "If I had a mind," said the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, "to hinder the progress of the Gospel, and to establish the kingdom of darkness, I would go about telling the people, they might have the Spirit of God and yet not feel it;" or, which is much the same, that the pardon which Christ procured for them, is already obtained by them, whether they enjoy a sense of it or not.

XVI. In the next paragraph, page 7, (who would believe it!) you come fully into Mr. W.'s doctrine of "doing something in order to obtain justification." You were reminded (Third Check, p. 51,) that "St. Paul and Mr. W. generally mean by justification that wonderful transaction of the Spirit of God in a returning prodigal's conscience, by which the forgiveness of his sins is proclaimed to him through the blood of sprinkling." Nevertheless, speaking of the sense of pardon, and testifying of it to a sinner's conscience, you grant that "this knowledge of our interest in Christ," this experienced justification, "is certainly to be sought in the use of all appointed means; we are to seek that we may find, to ask that we may have, to knock that it might be opened unto us. In this sense," the very sense we generally fix to the word justification, "all the texts you have brought to prove that man is to do something in order to

obtain justification, and to find favour with God, admit of an *easy solution*." That is, in plain English, easily demonstrate the truth of Mr. W.'s proposition, which has been so loudly exclaimed against as *dreadfully heretical*!

O prejudice, thou mischievous cause of discord, why didst thou cast thy black veil in June, and the following months, over the *easy solution* which has been found out in December? And what a pity is it, dear Sir, you did not see this *solution* before you had attempted to expose our grey-headed Elisha, by the publication of that weak and trifling dialogue with the Popish Friar at Paris!

XVII. Page 10. After showing that you confound the atonement with the application of it, the work of Christ with that of the Holy Ghost, you produce one of my arguments, (the first you have produced to refute,) brought to prove that we must do something in order to justification. I had asserted that we must *believe*, faith being previous to justification. You say, "*I deny the assertion.*" Do you, indeed, honoured Sir! Upon what ground? "The Holy Ghost teaches," say you, "that all who believe *are justified*." And does this prove the point? The king says to a deserter, "Bow to my son and thou shalt not be shot :" "Bow to the prince," adds an officer; "all who bow to him *are pardoned*." Must the soldier conclude from the words, *are pardoned*, that the pardon is previous to the bow? Again: You are sick, and your physician says, "Take this medicine; all who take it *are cured*." "Very well," answers your nurse, "you need not then distress and perplex my master, by making him take your remedy. The taking of it cannot possibly be previous to his recovery, for you say all who take it *are cured*." This is just such another argument as that of my honoured friend. O Sir, how tottering is that system, which even such a writer as yourself cannot

prop up, without putting so forced a construction upon the Apostle's words, "All that believe *are* justified."

Now we have seen upon what scriptural ground you maintain, that believing cannot be previous to justification, permit me, honoured Sir, to quote some of the many scriptures which induce us to believe just the reverse. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" that is, in the lowest sense of the word, thou shalt be justified; for God justifies the ungodly that *believe* in Jesus.—"We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ,—whom he hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past.—As Moses lifted up the serpent, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish;" should be pardoned, &c.—"Faith shall be imputed to us for righteousness, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus.—Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God.—Without faith it is impossible to please God.—He that believeth not," far from being justified, as is insinuated, "shall be damned; the wrath of God abideth on him, he is condemned already." (John iii. 18.) Light cannot be more opposite to darkness than this doctrine of Christ to that which my honoured friend thinks it his duty to patronize.

XVIII. When you have ineffectually endeavoured to defend your sentiment from Scripture, you attempt to do it from reason. "Faith," say you, "can no more subsist without its object, than there can be a marriage without a husband." This is as proper an argument as you could advance, had you intended to disprove the doctrine you seem studious to defend; for it is evident that a woman must be married, before she can have a husband. So sure, then, as marriage is previous

to having an husband, faith is previous to receiving Christ ; for we receive him by faith. (John i. 12.)

However, from this extraordinary argument you conclude, that “the doctrine of believing before justification is not less contrary to reason than it is to Scripture ;” but I flatter myself that my judicious readers will draw a conclusion diametrically opposite.

XIX. A quotation from Augustine appears next, and secures the ruin of your scheme. For if faith be compared to a lantern, and Christ to the light in the lantern, common sense tells us we must have the lantern before we can receive the candle which is to give us light. Or, in other words, we must have faith before we can receive Christ : For you very justly observe, that faith receiveth Christ, who is the true Light.

XX. Augustine’s lantern makes way for the witticism with which you conclude your second epistle. “No letters,” says my honoured friend, “were sent through the various provinces against old Mordecai, for supposing that the woman (Luke xv.) lights a candle, &c., in order to find her lost piece ; but because he insists upon it, that the piece lights the candle, sweeps the house, and searches diligently in order to find the woman.” Permit me to ask, whether your wit here has not for a moment got the start of your judgment ? I introduced the woman seeking the piece she had lost, merely to show that it is neither an heresy nor an absurdity to “seek something in order to find it ;” and that instance proved my point full as well as if I had fixed upon Saul seeking his father’s asses, or Joseph seeking his brethren in Dothan.

If it be as great an absurdity to say, that sinners are to seek the *Lord*, as it is to say, that a piece seeks the woman that has lost it ; let me tell you, that Mr. W. has the good fortune to be countenanced in his folly, first by yourself, who tell us,

(page 7.) that the knowledge of Christ, and our interest in him, "is certainly to be sought in the use of all the appointed means;" And secondly by Isaiah, who says, "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found :" By St. Paul, who tells the Athenians, that "all nations of men are to seek the Lord :" And by Christ himself, who says, "They that seek me early shall find me ;—Seek that you may find," &c.

I leave you to judge, whether it was worth your while to impeach Mr. W.'s good sense, not only by reflecting upon your own, but by inevitably involving Isaiah, St. Paul, and our Lord himself, in the ridicule cast upon my vindicated friend ! For the same sinner, who is represented by the lost piece, is, a few verses before, represented by the lost son : And you know Jesus Christ tells us that he came from far to seek his Father's pardon and assistance.

#### REMARKS ON THE THIRD LETTER.

You begin this letter by saying, "How God may deal with the heathen world is not for us to pry into." But we may believe what God has revealed. If the Holy Ghost declares, that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him," we may credit what he says, without being "wise above what is written."

If you cannot set aside that apostolic part of the Minutes, you try, however, to press it into the service of your doctrine. "There is," say you, "a material difference between saying, *He that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted, and SHALL BE accepted;*" and because "the verb is in the present tense," you conclude there is no need of fearing God, or working righteousness, in order to find acceptance. This is exactly such another argument as that which I just now refuted, "We need not believe in order to be justified ; because it is said, *All that believe ARE justified, and not SHALL*

BE justified." You can no more prove by the one, that Cornelius, provoking God and working unrighteousness, was accepted of him; than by the other, that *unbelievers* ARE justified, because it is said that *believers* are so.

A similar instance may convince you of it: "All run," says St. Paul, "but one receiveth the prize." I who am a stranger to refinements, immediately conclude from those words, that running is *previous* to the receiving of the prize, and in order to it. "No," says a friend, "there is a material difference between saying, One *receiveth* the prize, and, One *shall receive* the prize. The verb is in the present tense, and therefore the plain sense of the passage is, (not by running he does anything to receive the prize, but,) that he who runs *is* possessed of the prize, and proves himself to be so." Candid reader, if such an argument proselytes thee to Dr. Crisp's doctrine, I shall suspect there is no small difference between English and Swiss reason.

However, to make up the weight of your argument, you add, "Cornelius was a chosen vessel." True; for "God hath chosen to himself the man that is godly;" and such was Cornelius: "A devout man," says St. Luke, "and one that feared God with all his house." But if my honoured opponent speaks of an election which drags after it the horrors of absolute reprobation, and hangs the millstone of unavoidable damnation about the neck of millions of our fellow-creatures, I must call for proof.

Till it comes, I follow you in your observations upon the merit of rewardableness of good works. Most of them are answered, First Check, p. 74, &c., and Second Check, p. 155. The rest I answer thus:—

1. If you do not believe Mr. Henry, when he assures us David speaks of *himself*, "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness," &c.,

(Psalm xviii,) believe, at least, the sacred historian, who confirms my assertion; (2 Sam. xxii. :) and consider the very title of the Psalm, " David spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of his enemies, and from the hand of Saul."

2. But "when David speaks in his own person, his language is very different. 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant,' says he; 'for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' " The Psalmist does not here contradict what he says of the rewardableness of good works. (Psalm xviii.) He only appeals from the law of innocence to the law of grace, and only disclaims all merit in point of justification and salvation; a thing which Mr. W. takes care to do when he says, even in the Minutes, "Not by the merit of works, but by believing in Christ."

3. My honoured correspondent asks next, "Where is the man who has the witness of having done what God commanded?" I answer, every one has who walks in the light as God is in the light, and can say with St. John, " Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God: And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight."

4. "But Bishop Beveridge spoke just the reverse; for he said, in his Private Thoughts, 'I sin in my best duties,' " &c. That may be; for he was but a young convert when he wrote his "Private Thoughts." I hope, before he died he enjoyed more Gospel liberty. But whether he did or not, we appeal from his "Private Thoughts," to the above-mentioned public declaration and evangelical experience of St. John.

5. If many Roman Catholics do not ascribe merit to "mere external performances," I have done them great injustice; and to repair that wrong, I

declare my full approbation of the excellent passage upon *merit*, which you quote in French, from the works of the Bishop of Meaux. I say, *in French*, because your English translation represents him as looking on *all* opinion of merit as *presumptuous*, whereas he blames only *l'opinion d'un mérite présomptueux*, “the doctrine of a presumptuous merit,”—of a merit which is not all derived from Christ, and does not terminate in the glory of his grace.

The dying challenge of Alex. Seton is answered in the Second Check, First Letter. As to your quotation from Bishop Cooper, it does as little credit to his learning, as to his charity; for Augustine, who had no more “the spirit of Antichrist” than the Bishop himself, uses perpetually the word *merit*, in speaking of man and his works.

Let us now see how you “split the hair;” that is, fix the difference there is between being rewarded *according to our works*,\* and *secundum merita operum*, according to the *merit* or *rewardableness* which Christ gives to our works. “The difference,” say you, “by no means depends upon the splitting of an hair; those expressions are as wide as east from west.” Are they indeed? Then it must be the east and the west of the map of the world, which meet in one common line upon the globe. This will appear if we consider the manner in which you untie the Gordian knot.

“Good works,” say you, “are rewarded because God, of his own mere favour, rich grace, and undeserved bounty, has promised that he will freely give such rewards to those whom he has chosen in his dear Son.” Now, Sir, simplify this sentence, and you tell us just that “good works are rewarded, because God freely promised to reward them.”

And is this the east of my honoured oppo-

\* See 1 John iii. 22, and Vindication, pp. 72—83. You have no right to throw out this middle term till you have proved that my quotations are false.

nent's orthodoxy? Surprising! It just meets the west of Popish heterodoxy. You know, Sir, that Thomas Aquinas and Scotus are as great Divines among the Romanists, as Calvin and Luther among the Protestants: And, in fleeing from Mr. Wesley, you are just gone over to Scotus and Baxter; for Scotus, and Clara, his disciple, maintain, that if God gives rewards to the godly, *non oritur obligatio ex naturâ actus, sed ex suppositione decreti et promissi,* “the obligation does not arise from the nature of the action rewarded, but from the decree and free promise of the rewarder.” “Though so much be given in Scripture to good works,” says the Council of Trent, “yet far be it from a Christian to glory in himself, and not in the Lord, whose goodness is so great to all men, that he wills those things to be *their merits*, which are *his gifts.*”—(Can. 16, de Justif.)

“Most Protestants,” says Baxter, “will take *merit* to signify something which profiteth God, and which is our own, and not his *gift* and *grace*: but they are mistaken.”

Some, however, are more candid: Bucer says, “If by *meriting*, the holy Fathers and others mean nothing but to do *in faith, by the grace of God*, good works, which the Lord has *promised* to reward, in this sense” (which is that which Scotus, Baxter, and Mr. W. fix to *merit*) “we shall in no wise condemn that word.”

Hence it is, that whole congregations of real Protestants have not scrupled, at times, to use the word *we merit*, in their humblest addresses to the throne of grace. “Congregations of real Protestants!” says my honoured friend, “Popery is about midway between Protestantism and such worshippers. Who are they?” I answer, they are the orthodox opposers of the Minutes, the truly honourable the Countess of Huntingdon, the Rev. Mr. Shirley, the Rev. Mr. Madan, and all the con-

gregations that use their Hymns ; for all they agree to sing,

Thou hast the righteousness supplied,  
By which we *merit* heaven.

See Lady Huntingdon's Hymns, page 339 ; and Mr. Madan's Collection, which you frequently use, Hymn xxv, page 27, last stanza. Come then, dear Sir, while Mr. M. shakes hands with his venerable father Mr. W., permit the Vindicator of the Minutes to do the same with the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*, and let us lovingly follow Scotus and Baxter, singing,

Christ hath the righteousness supplied,  
By which we *merit* heaven.

If you say, "True ; but it is of God's own mere favour, rich grace, and undeserved bounty in His dear Son ;" I answer, we are agreed, and beforehand I subscribe an hundred such clauses, being fully persuaded of the truth of Mr. W.'s proposition when explained according to the analogy of faith, "There is no original *merit* but in the blood and obedience of Christ ; and no derived *merit*, or (if you dislike that word out of the Lock chapel) no derived *rewardableness*, but that which we are supplied with through the Spirit of Christ, and the blood of His cross :" If Mr W. meant any more by the saying we have quoted, he will permit me to use his own words, and say that he " leaned too much towards Calvinism."

I cannot better close the subject of merit, and requite your quotation from Dr. Willet, than by transcribing a third passage from the pious and judicious Mr. Baxter :—

" We are agreed on the negative : 1. That no man or angel can merit of God in proper commutative justice, giving him somewhat for his benefits that shall profit him, or to which he had no absolute right.—2. No man can merit any thing of God upon the terms of the law of innocence (but punishment).—3. Nor can he merit any thing of

God by the law of grace, unless it be supposed first to be a free gift, and merited by Christ.

" And affirmatively we are, I think, agreed : 1. That God governs us by a law of *grace*, which hath a *promise*, and gives by way of *reward*.—2. That God calls it *his justice* to reward men according to his law of grace. (Heb. vi. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 8.)—3. That this supposes, that such works as God rewards have a *moral aptitude* for that reward, which chiefly consists in these things, that they spring from the Spirit of God, that their faultiness is pardoned through the blood and merits of Christ, that they are done in the love and to the glory of God, and that they are presented to God by Jesus Christ.—4. That this *moral aptitude*, is called in Scripture  $\alpha\tilde{\xi}\alpha$ , that is, *worthiness* or *merit*; so that thus far *worthiness* or *merit* is a Scripture phrase.—And, 5. that this *worthiness* or *merit* is only in point of *paternal, governing justice*, according to the *law of grace*, ordering that which in itself is a *free gift* merited by Christ.

" All orthodox Christians hold the fore-described doctrine of merit in *sense*, though not in *words*; for they that deny *merit*, confess the *rewardableness* of our obedience, and acknowledge that the Scripture useth the term *worthy*, and that  $\alpha\tilde{\xi}\alpha$  and  $\alpha\tilde{\xi}\alpha$  may be translated *meriting* and *merit*, as well as *worthy* and *worthiness*. This is the same thing in other words, which the ancient Christians meant by *merit*. When godly persons earnestly extol holiness, saying, 'that the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' and yet deny all *merit*, reviling all that assert it, they do but show that they understand not the word, and think others also misunderstand it; and so we are reproaching one another, where we are agreed, and know it not; like the woman who turned away her servant upon the controversy, Whether the house should be swept with a *besom*, or with a *broom*.

"The partial teachers are the cause of this, while, instead of opening the doctrine, and showing in what sense we have or have not any *worthiness* or *merit*, they without distinction cry down *merit*, and reproach those that do otherwise. And if they do but say, 'Such a man speaks for *merit* and *free will*', they think that they sufficiently render him odious to their followers; when yet all sober Christians in all ages have been for *merit* and *free will* in a sound sense. And is not this to be adversaries of truth, and love, and peace?

"I formerly thought, that though we agree in the *thing*, it is best to omit the *name*, because the Papists have abused it; and I think so still in such companies where the use of it is not understood, and will do more harm than good. But in other cases, I now think it better to keep the word, 1. Lest we seem to the ignorant to be of another religion than all the ancient Churches were.\* 2. Lest we harden the Papists, Greeks, and others, by denying the sound doctrine in *terms*, which they will think we deny in *sense*. And, 3. Because our penury of words is such, that for my part I remember no other word so fit to substitute instead of *merit*, *desert*, or *worthiness*. The word *rewardableness* is long and harsh. But it is nothing else that we mean."—*Baxter's End of Doctrinal Controversies*, page 294.

#### REMARKS ON MR. HILL'S FOURTH LETTER.

I AM glad that my honoured opponent, in the beginning of his Fourth Letter, does Mr. W. the

\* "It is a great advantage to the Papists," says our judicious author, "that many Protestants wholly disclaim the word *merit*, and simply deny the merit of Gospel obedience. For herenpon the teachers show their scholars, that all the Fathers speak for *merit*, and do tell them that the Protestant doctrine is new and heretical, as being contrary to all the ancient Doctors; and when their scholars see it with their eyes, no wonder if they believe it, to our dishonour."

justice to admit of the explanation I have given of that misunderstood assertion, "All who are convinced of sin undervalue themselves." Had you done otherwise, Sir, you would have shown judgment without mercy. Nevertheless, you still think that explanation forced, while many believe it not only natural, and *agreeable* to Mr. W.'s whole plan of doctrine, but so solid that no arguments can overthrow it. If you turn to the First Check, pages 87—89, you will see more clearly, that you do Mr. W. no favour in "dismissing this article of the Minutes."

But you prepare to attack the next with the utmost vigour. *A part of the Minutes which you esteem most contrary to sound doctrine*, is, say you, that "we are every hour and every moment pleasing, or displeasing to God, according to the whole of our inward tempers and outward behaviour," &c. And it is, I own, diametrically opposite to the favourite sentiment which you thus express, "Though I believe David's sin displeased the Lord, must I therefore believe that David's person was under the curse of the law?" (I suppose you mean *under God's displeasure*; for of this Mr. W. speaks, nor does he mention *the curse of the law* in all the Minutes:) You boldly answer, "Surely, no.—Like Ephraim, he was still a pleasant child, though he went on frowardly;" *in adultery and murder*, "he did not lose the character of the man after God's own heart." You might as well have advanced at once that unguarded proposition of Dr. Crisp, "God does no longer stand displeased though a believer do sin often; no sin can possibly do him any hurt." Is this what you call "sound doctrine?" And is that the *worst part of the Minutes*, which opposes such a dangerous tenet? Then how *excellent* must the *other* parts be! Indeed, Sir, their Vindicator could say nothing stronger to demonstrate their soundness, seasonableness, and

importance. But let us consider your arguments ; and that with such care as the importance of the subject requires.

If "David's sin displeased the Lord," but not "his person." This is what you must mean, if you oppose Mr. W.'s proposition. I like your shifting the terms ; it is a sign you are a little ashamed the world should see the good Doctor's scheme without some covering. *Erubisti, salva res est.* 1. Your intimation that the Lord was not displeased with David's person, bears hard upon the equity and veracity of God. David commits adultery and murder in Jerusalem, and Claudius in Rome : God sees them, and says, agreeably to your scheme, "They are both guilty of the same crimes, and both impenitent ; but David is a Jew, an elect, a sheep, and therefore, though he sins against *ten* times more light than the other, I am not at all displeased at him. But Claudius is an Heathen, a reprobate, a goat, and my anger smokes against him ; he shall surely die." If this be God's method, how can he make the following appeal ? "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal ? Are not your ways unequal ? The soul that sinneth, it shall die ; wherefore turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel ?" (See Ezek. xviii., and Second Check, pp. 189, 190.)

2. Your distinction is overthrown by Scripture ; for we read, Gen. xxxviii. 10, that "the thing which Onan did, displeased the Lord." "True," might you say upon your scheme, "this is the very thing I assert ; this mode of speech shows that God was angry at Onan's *sin*, and not at his *person*."—But this would be a great mistake, honoured Sir; for the sacred historian adds immediately, "wherefore God slew him also." He showed his heavy displeasure at his *person*, by punishing him with death, as well as his brother Er, who "was wicked in the sight of the Lord."

3. But if you will not believe Mr. W., when he declares that God is displeased at the *persons* of the righteous the moment they do those *things* which displease him, believe at least the oracles of God. "God's anger was kindled against Moses." (Exod. iv. 14.)—"The Lord was very angry against Aaron," (Deut. ix. 20,) and with all Israel. Witness those awful words, "Let me alone, that I may consume them in a moment." Isaiah, whom you allow to be an elect, says, "Thou wast angry with me:" God himself says, (Isaiah xlvi. 6,) "I was angry with my people;" and David, who frequently deprecates God's wrath in his penitential Psalms, observes, that "his anger smokes against the sheep of his pasture," when they go astray. (Psalm lxxiv. 1.)

4. The New Testament inculcates this doctrine as well as the Old. St. Paul, having reminded the believers of Ephesus, that "no whoremonger, or covetous person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God," subjoins this seasonable caution: "Let no man deceive you;" no, not those good men, Dr. Crisp, and the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*: "For because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." "Impossible!" say those orthodox Protestants; "you may be children of disobedience, not only unto whoredom and covetousness, but unto adultery and murder, without fearing that the wrath of God will come upon you for these things: No, no, you will be 'pleasant children still.'" (See First Check, pp. 92—96.)

II. You proceed: "Shall I believe that because David was ungrateful, God (whose *gifts and callings are without repentance*) was unfaithful?" And shall I believe that God is not as *faithful* when he accomplishes his *threatenings*, as when he fulfils his *promises*? You reply, "God's *gifts and callings are without repentance*." And does

this prove that God's warnings are without meaning, and his threatenings without truth? St. Paul spoke those words of the election of the Jews; and it is certain God does not *repent* that he formerly *called* them, and gave them the land of Canaan; any more than he *repents* his having now *rejected* them, and *taken from them* the good land which he gave their fathers; for as he had once sufficient reasons to do the one, so he has now to do the other.

But if you will make this passage mean, that the Divine favour and blessings can never be forfeited through any fall into sin; I beg you will answer these queries: Had not God *given* all angels a place in his favour and glory? And did not many of them lose it by their fall? Was not innocent Adam interested in the Divine favour and image? And did he not lose both, together with paradise, when he fell into sin? Did not king Saul forfeit the crown which God had given him, and the throne to which he had *called* him? Were not Judas's *calling* and Apostleship forfeited by his unfaithfulness, as well as one of the twelve *thrones* which Christ had promised him? What will you say of the unprofitable servant, from whom his Lord took the talent unimproved? Lost he not a blessing *given*, and *his calling to occupy* with it? And can you assert, that the man who took his fellow-servant by the throat, did not lose "the forgiveness of a debt of ten thousand talents?" or that those apostates, who "tread under foot the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified," do not forfeit their sanctification by "doing despite to the Spirit of grace?" Is it right thus to set the author of the Epistle to the Romans against the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews?

III. Your bringing in *backsliding Ephraim, the pleasant child*, as a witness of the truth of your doctrine, is a most unhappy proof. "Rejoice not, O Israel, as other people," says the Lord, Hosea ix. 1,

"for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God." This whoring Israel is called Ephraim, verse 13: "Ephraim," the pleasant child, is "planted as a pleasant plant." Notwithstanding "Ephraim shall bring forth his children for the murderer. All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them. For the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house: I will love them no more." Hence the Prophet observes immediately after, "Ephraim is smitten; my God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him."

IV. However, you still affirm, that "David, notwithstanding his horrible backslidings, did not lose the character of the man after God's own heart." But you will permit me to believe the contrary,

1. Upon the testimony of the Psalmist himself, who says in your favourite Psalm, "Thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been very wroth with thine anointed; thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant; thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground." (Psalm lxxxix. 38.)

2. Where is David called *the man after God's own heart*, while he continued an impenitent adulterer? How much more guarded is the Scripture than your Letters! "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside save only in the matter of Uriah." (1 Kings xv. 5.) Here you see the immoral parenthesis of ten months spent in adultery and murder, expressly pointed at, and excepted by the Holy Ghost.

3. David himself, far from thinking that sin could never separate between God and a just man who draws back into wickedness, speaks thus in the last charge which he gave to Solomon: "And thou, Solomon, my son, know the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off for ever." (1 Chron.

xxviii. 9.) Hence it appears that the God of Solomon's father is very different from the picture which Dr. Crisp draws of David's God. The former can be so displeased at an impenitent backslider as to *cast him off for ever*; while the latter accounts him *a pleasant child still*. But let us come to matter of fact.

4. Displeasure, anger, or wrath in God, is not that disturbing, boisterous passion so natural to fallen man; but an invariable disapprobation of sin, and a steady design to punish the sinner. Now God severely manifested his righteous displeasure at David's person, when he punished him by not restraining any longer the ambition of his rebellious son. How remarkably did his dreadful punishments answer his heinous crimes! He wanted the fruit of his adultery to live, but inflexible justice destroys it. The crown of righteousness was *fallen from his head*, and his royal crown is *profaned and cast to the ground*. He had not turned out the hellish tempter; and he is turned out of his own palace and kingdom. He flees beyond Jordan for his life; and, as he flees, Shimei throws stones at him; volleys of curses accompany the stones, and the most cutting challenges follow the curses: "Come out, thou bloody man," said he, "thou man of Belial! The Lord hath delivered thy kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son; and behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man." To which David could answer nothing, but, "*Let him curse; for the Lord*, by not restraining his wickedness, *hath permissively said unto him, Curse David*. I see the impartial justice of a sin-avenging God, through the cruel abuse of this raging man." This was not all; he had *secretly committed adultery* with Uriah's wife, and his son *publicly commits incest* with his wives. And, to complete the horror of his punishment, he leaves the most dreadful curse upon his posterity: "Thou hast slain Uriah with the

sword of the children of Ammon," says the Lord, "now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thy house," and thy own children shall murder one another. What a terrible punishment was this! and how strong must be the prejudice of those who maintain that God was not displeased at David's *person*!

V. Pass we now to an argument which you seem to consider as one of the main pillars of your doctrine. "If one believer sin by an unclean thought," say you, "and another by an unclean act, does the former continue in a state of grace, and the other forfeit his sonship? Take heed lest you should be forced to go to Rome for an answer to this query." Without going even to the Convent of the Benedictine Monks in Paris, I answer, it is evident from Scripture, that an adulterous thought delighted in, is adultery. He that entertains such a thought is an adulterer, one who is absolutely unfit for the presence of an holy God. "Be not deceived," says St. Paul, "neither fornicators nor adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of God." Therefore, adultery of heart certainly excludes an impenitent backslider out of heaven; though it will not sink him into so deep a hell, as if he had drawn another into the commission of his intended crime. You add,

"But if David had had only an angry thought, he had still been a murderer in the sight of God." Not so; for there is a righteous anger, which is a virtue and not a sin; or else how could Christ "have looked round about on the Pharisees with anger," and continued sinless? You mean, probably, that if David had only hated Uriah in his heart he would have been a murderer. If so, your observation is very just; "for he that hateth his brother," says St. John, "is a murderer; and you know," adds he, "that no murderer," though he were a royal Psalmist, "hath eternal life abiding in him."

But what do you get by these arguments? Nothing at all. You only make it easier to prove that your doctrine is erroneous. For if David would have forfeited heaven by looking on Uriah's wife, to lust after her in his heart ; or by intending in his breast to murder her husband ; how much more did he forfeit it when mental sins were fully ripened into outward enormities ! Ye "are of your father the devil, whose works ye do," said Christ to some of the chosen nation : And if adultery and murder are works of the devil, it follows from those words of our Lord, that, while David continued impenitent, he was not a man after God's own heart, as my honoured opponent too charitably supposes ; but a man after the own heart of him "who abode not in the truth, and was a murderer from the beginning."

VI. But you add, "Sin did not reign in him as a king, it only for a time usurped as a tyrant." Nay, Sir, sin is a tyrant wherever he reigns, and he reigns wherever he usurps. "Where will you draw the line" between the reign and tyranny of sin ? Are not both included under the word *dominion* ? "Sin," says St. Paul, "shall not have dominion over you that are under grace." Had I made such a distinction as this, some Protestants would deservedly have called it *metaphysical* ; but as it comes from the orthodox author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*, it will probably pass for *evangelical*.

Very different, however, is St. Peter's orthodoxy. "Of whom a man is overcome," says he, "of the same is he brought into bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." Nevertheless, even such apostates, so long as the day of their visitation lasteth, may again repent and believe ; for, as you justly observe, they have still

"an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

VII. You try to prove your point by Scripture. "There is," say you, "no condemnation to them who are in Christ." True! but it is while they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" a clause which you prudently keep out of sight. And surely David walked after the flesh, when in the act of adultery and murder. You proceed: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Nobody, if God's elect are penitent believers, "who walk not after the flesh;" but if they are impenitent adulterers and hypocritical murderers,—Jews and Gentiles, law and Gospel, prophets and apostles, God and their own consciences, all will agree to lay their crimes to their charge. You urge that "Christ by one offering hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified." True! but not those who are *unsanctified*. And certainly such are all adulterers and murderers. These ought rather to be ranked with those who "tread under foot the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified."

It is said, however, "Ye" (believing, loving, fruitful Colossians, see chap. i. 4, 6,) "are complete in him." It is so; but not, ye impenitent backsliders, ye unclean defilers of another's bed.—Such are complete in *evil*, not in *good*; in *Belial*, not in *Christ*. Alas for the prostitution of the sacred and pure word of God! can it also be pressed into the service of profaneness and impurity? To rescue at least one sentence from such manifest abuse, I might observe, the original may, with the greatest propriety, be rendered, *filled with* (or *by*) *him*, instead of "complete in him;" and I think the context fixes this sense upon it. This Apostle is cautioning the Colossians against vain philosophers, whose doctrine was empty and deceitful. Now, that he might do this the more effectually, he points out a more excellent Teacher, whose character and qualifica-

tions he describes when he says, "In him dwelleth the fulness, *πληρωμα*, of the Godhead." He immediately adds, *εν αυτω πεπληρωμενοι*, (a verb of the same etymology with the noun, and undoubtedly of a similar import,) "Ye are filled with (or by) him." As if he had said, "Christ is filled with the Godhead of the Father, and ye with the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of wisdom, righteousness, and strength." *Plenitudo Christi* (says the learned and pious Bengelius on the passage) *redundat in ecclesiam*, "The fulness of God dwelleth in the Mediator, and overflows upon his Church :" The very sense our translators have given the very same two words in Eph. iii. 19. Why they rendered them differently here is hard to say.

VIII. You go on, "No falls or backslidings in God's children can ever bring them again under condemnation, because 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made them free from the law of sin and death.'" A most dangerous proposition, exposed Vindication pp. 94, 96, 97, and contrary to the very Scripture by which you try to support it. 1. To the context, where those to whom there is no condemnation are said to be persons "who walk not after the flesh," and are therefore very different from impenitent adulterers and murderers, who bring forth the most execrable fruits of the flesh. 2. To the text itself; for if "the law," or power "of the Spirit of the life of Christ Jesus, hath made" the believer "free from the law" or power "of sin," how can he be represented as the same "servant of sin;" as "sold under sin;"—sold under adultery and murder for ten months? But you are not at a loss for an answer.

IX. "We are very apt," say you, "to set up mountainous distinctions concerning the various degrees of sin, especially of sins after conversion :" —This, together with your placing "an angry

thought" upon a level with deliberate murder, seems to insinuate, that you make a very little difference between an atrocious crime and a sin of surprise; so that, upon your scheme, a bloody murderer may plead that he is not more guilty than a man who has felt a motion of impatience; and the latter may be hurried out of his wits, as if he had committed murder. To remove this mistake, I need only observe, that if all are Papists who make a material difference between various sins, or between the same sins variously aggravated, my worthy opponent is as sound a Papist as myself: For when he acts as a magistrate, he does not promiscuously pass the same sentence upon every one. He commits one to prison, and dismisses another with a gentle reprimand. Our Lord himself sets you the example. Pharisees shall receive "the greater damnation," and it shall be "MORE TOLERABLE for Sodom than for Chorazin, in the day of judgment:" Whence we may justly infer, that the sin of some is more "mountainous" than the sin of others.

But as you have made choice of David's case, permit me to argue from his experience. He was once, you know, violently angry with Nabal; but as he seasonably restrained his anger, and meekly confessed his sin, God forgave him without "breaking his bones." Not so, when the unrestrained evil of his heart, in the matter of Uriah, produced the external fruits of treachery and murder. For *then* the Lord inflicted upon him all the dreadful punishments which we have already considered. *Hear the rod*, therefore, and learn what *vast* difference the Lord makes between sins, whether committed after or before conversion.

X. What follows is a sweet and smooth Antinomian pill, so much the more dangerous as it is gilt with gold taken from the sanctuary, from *the golden altar* itself. Hence it is that multitudes swal-

low it down as *rich grace*, without the least scruple or suspicion. Lord, dart a beam of thy wisdom into the mind of thy servant, that I may separate the precious from the vile, and expose the dangerous ingredient without depreciating the gold that covers it !

“What is all sin,” do you say, “before the infinitely precious atoning blood of Jesus?” Nothing at all, when that blood is humbly apprehended by penitent believers who depart from all iniquity. But when it is accounted a “common thing,” and “trodden under foot” by impenitent apostates; or wantonly pleaded in defence of sin, by loose Nicolaitans or lukewarm Laodiceans, it does not answer its gracious design. On the contrary, “how shall we escape,” says St. Paul, “if we thus neglect such great salvation?” And “of how much sorer punishment,” than others, “shall they be thought worthy, who do” such “despite to the Spirit of grace?” (See Hebrews ii. 5, and x. 29.) You go on,

“If Christ has fulfilled the whole law, and borne the curse, then all debts and claims against his people, be they more or be they less, be they small or be they great, be they before or be they after conversion, are for ever and for ever cancelled. All trespasses are forgiven them.—They are justified from all things.—They already have everlasting life.”—What! before they repent and believe? A bold assertion this! which sets Jesus against Christ,—our Priest against our Prophet. For Christ himself teaches us, that many for whom his fatlings are killed, and all things are now ready, through an obstinate refusal of his sincere (I hope nobody will say hypocritical) invitation, *shall never taste of his supper.* And as if this were not enough to arm us against your doctrine, he commissioned an Apostle to assure his church, that some who have tasted of his Gospel supper; that is, who “have been

enlightened, have tasted the heavenly gift, the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, do crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh," and, by that means, so totally fall away, that "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance." A clear proof this, that those who once truly repented, and were even made partakers of the Holy Ghost, may "quench the Spirit" and "sin against the Holy Ghost;" may not only fall, but fall finally. (Heb. vi. 4.)

2. Your doctrine sets also our High Priest against our Heavenly King, who declares, that if he who was once his faithful servant, begins to "beat his fellow servants," much more to murder them, he will, as Judge of all, command him to "be bound hand and foot," and "delivered to the tormentors." See Second Check, pages 214—219.

3. Your doctrine drags after it all the absurdities of eternal, absolute justification. It sets aside the use of repentance and faith, in order to pardon and acceptance. It represents the sins of the elect as forgiven, not only before they are confessed, but even before they are committed; a notion which that strong Calvinist, Dr. Owen himself, could not but oppose. It supposes, that all the penitents who have believed that they were once children of wrath, and that God was displeased at them when they lived in sin, have believed a lie. It makes the preaching of the Gospel one of the most absurd, wicked, and barbarous things in the world. For what can be more absurd than to say, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel: He that believeth not shall be damned," if a certain number can never repent or believe, and a certain number can never be damned? And what can be more wicked, than to distress elect sinners, by bidding them "flee from the wrath to come," if there is absolutely no wrath, neither past, present, nor to come, for them;

if all their sins, “be they more or less, be they small or great, are for ever and for ever cancelled ?” As for the reprobates, how barbarous is it to bid them flee, if adamantine chains, eternal decrees of past wrath, perpetually bind them down, that they may never escape the repeated eternal strokes of the wrath to come !

4. But what shocks me most in your scheme is, the reproach which it unavoidably fixes upon Christ. It says, the elect “are justified from all things” even before they believe. In all their sins “God views them ‘without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing :’ They stand always complete in the everlasting righteousness of the Redeemer.”—“Black in themselves, they are comely through his comeliness :” So that when they commit adultery and murder, He “who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” can nevertheless address them with, “Thou art all fair, my love, my undefiled ; there is no spot in thee.”

What a prostitution of the word of God is here ! We blame a wild youth for dropping some bold inuendos about Jupiter, in a play composed by a poor Heathen. But I acquit thee of indecency, O Terence, if a vindicator of Christian piety has a right to represent our holy and righteous God, as saying to a bloody adulterer *flagranti delicto*, “Thou art all fair, my love, my undefiled ; there is no spot in thee.” And are these the fat pastures and limpid waters where Gospel preachers “feed the sheep ?” Where, then, O where, are the “barren pastures and muddled waters” in which barefaced Antinomians feed the goats ? Is not this “taking the children’s bread to cast it to the dogs ?” I had almost asked, Is it not “the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place ?” See ye not the Lord, O ye mistaken Christians, looking down from the habitation of his holiness ? And do ye not hear him thunder his expostulation from hea-

ven? "How long will ye blaspheme mine honour, and have such pleasure in deceit? Know ye not that I have chosen to myself the man that is godly, and that him who delighteth in iniquity doth my soul abhor?"

5. And plead not that you have quoted Scripture in defence of your point. If the Church says, in a mystical song, "*I am black in the eyes of the world, because the sun of affliction and persecution hath looked upon me while I kept the vineyards; but I am comely in the sight of God,*" whose Spirit enables me with unwearied patience to 'bear the burden and heat of the day ;'" you have absolutely no right, either from divinity or criticism, to make those words mean, as they do upon your scheme, "*I am black by the atrocious crimes which I actually commit, black by the horrors of adultery and murder; but, no matter, I am comely by the purity and chastity of my Saviour; my sins, be they small or be they great, are for ever and for ever cancelled; I am justified from all things.*"—Again: If God says to a soul actually washed, walking with him as Enoch, and walking in white as the few names in Sardis, who had not defiled their garments, "*Thou art all fair, my undefiled;*" is it right to take those gracious words, and apply them to every lukewarm Laodicean we meet with; and to every apostate, who not only "*desiles his garments,*" but "*wallows in the mire*" like the "*sow that was washed?*"

6. Another great, and, if I am not mistaken, insurmountable difficulty attends your scheme. You tell us, that "a believer's person stands absolved and always complete in the everlasting righteousness of the Redeemer." But I ask, Was he absolved *before* he was a believer? If you answer, "No, he was absolved the moment he began to believe," it follows, that he does something; that is, he believes towards his absolution. And thus your main pillars, "that faith is not previous to

justification, that there is no wrath in God for the elect, and that all claims against his people before or after conversion, are for ever and for ever cancelled ;" are not only broken, but ground to powder. Add to this, that if the believer be justified in consequence of his faith, it is evident that his justification, while he is on earth, can stand no longer than his faith ; and that if he "make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience," as Hymeneus, he must again *come into condemnation*. But supposing that, to avoid these inconsistencies, you boldly say, "He was justified from the time the Lamb was slain, that is, from the beginning of the world ;" you point-blank contradict Christ, who says, that "he who believeth not is condemned already." Thus, either the veracity of our Lord, or the truth of your doctrine, must go to the bottom. A sad dilemma this, for those who confound Crispianity with Christianity !

XI. You reply, "As soon shall Satan pluck Christ's crown from his head, as his purchase from his hand." Here is a great truth, making way for a palpable error, and a dreadful insinuation. Let us, First, see the great truth. It is most certain, that nobody shall ever be able to pluck Christ's sheep, that is, penitent believers, who "hear his voice and follow him," (John x. 27,) out of his protecting, almighty hand. But if the minds of those penitent believers are "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ ;" if they "wax wanton against him, turn after Satan, end in the flesh, and draw back to perdition ;" if *growing fat and kicking* like Jeshurun, they *neigh* like high-fed horses *after their neighbours' wives* ; we demand proof that they belong to the fold of Christ, and are not rather *goats* and *wolves in sheep's clothing*, who cannot, without conversion, "enter into the kingdom of heaven." Secondly, the palpable error is, that none of those for whom Christ died can be cast away and destroyed ; that no *virgin's lamp* can go

*out ; no promising harvest be choked with thorns ; no branch in Christ cut off for unfruitfulness ; no pardon forfeited, and no name blotted out of God's book :—That no salt can lose its savour, nobody receive the grace of God in vain, bury his talent, neglect such great salvation," trifle away "a day of visitation, look back after setting his hand to the Gospel plough," and grieve the Spirit till He is quenched, and strives no more. This error, so conducive to the Laodicean case, is expressly opposed by St. Peter, who informs us that some " deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." Christ himself, far from desiring to keep his lukewarm purchase *in his hand*, declares that he will " spew it out of his mouth."*

(Rev. iii. 16.)

Pass we on, Thirdly, to the dreadful insinuation. While you perpetually try to comfort a few elect, some of whom, for aught I know, comfort themselves already with their neighbours' wives, yea, and the wives of their fathers ; please to tell us how we shall comfort millions of reprobates, who, for what you know, try "to save themselves from this adulterous generation?" Do ye not hear how Satan, upon a supposition of the truth of your doctrine, triumphs over those unhappy victims of what some call God's sovereignty? While that old murderer shakes his bloody hand over the myriads devoted to endless torments, methinks I hear him say to his fellow-executioners of Divine vengeance : " As soon shall Christ's crown be plucked from his head, as this his free gift from my hand. Let yonder little flock of the elect commit adultery and incest without any possibility of missing heaven. I object no more. See what crowds of reprobates may pray, and reform, and strive, without any possibility of escaping hell. Let those gay elect shout, *Everlasting love ! Eternal justification ! and Finished salvation ! I consent ! See, ye fiends, see*

the immense prey that awaits us, and roar with me beforehand, *Everlasting wrath ! Eternal reprobation ! and Finished damnation !*"

XII. "Our Twelfth Article maintains, that good works necessarily spring out of a lively faith, insomuch, that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by its fruits." "This," you say, "I most firmly believe;" and, nevertheless, to prove just the contrary, to show that when David committed adultery and murder, he had a lively faith, and was in a state of justification and sanctification, you quote a verse of a hymn, composed by Mr. C. Wesley, which only confirms what I say of *undervaluing*, First Check, pp. 88—91. For you mistake him, if you suppose that, when *not one bud of grace appears* to ourselves, many may not appear to others; and if you apply to outward enormities, greedily committed, what the poet means of inward motions of sin cordially lamented and steadily opposed. Nevertheless, as some expressions in this hymn are not properly guarded, the pious author will forgive me if I transcribe part of a letter which I lately received from him :—

"I was once on the brink of Antinomianism, by unwarily reading Crisp and Saltmarsh. Just then, warm in my first love, I was in the utmost danger, when Providence threw in my way Baxter's Treatise, entitled, *An hundred errors of Dr. Crisp demonstrated.* My brother was sooner apprehensive of the dangerous abuse which would be made of our unguarded hymns and expressions than I was. Now I also see and feel we must all sink—unless we call St. James to our assistance. Yet let us still insist as much, or more than ever, on St. Paul's justification. What God has joined together let no man put asunder. The great Chillingworth saw clearly the danger of separating St. James from St. Paul. He used to wish that whenever a chapter of St. Paul's justification was read, another of St. James might be read at the same time."

XIII. When my honoured correspondent has endeavoured to prove by the above-mentioned Scriptures, arguments, and quotations, that an impenitent adulterer and murderer, instead of being under God's displeasure, is "a pleasant child still;" to complete his work, he proceeds to show the good that falls into sin do to believers. Never did the pious author of *Pictas Oxoniensis* employ his pen in a work less conducive to piety.

"God," says he, "often brings about his purposes by those very means which, to the human eye, would certainly defeat them. He has always the same thing in view, his own glory, and the salvation of his elect by Jesus Christ. This Adam was accomplishing when he put the whole world under the curse." Hail, Adam, under the fatal tree! pluck and eat abundantly, for "thou accomplishest the salvation of the elect!" O the inconsistency of your doctrine! If we insist upon *doing the will of God* in order to *enter his kingdom*, we are boldly exclaim'd against as proudly sharing the glory of our redemption with Christ. But here Adam is represented as his partner in the work of salvation, and a share of his glory positively assigned to the fall; i. e. to his disobedience to the Divine will. St. Paul asserts, that "by one man," Adam, "came death, and sin the sting of death, and so death," with his sting, "passed upon all men." But you inform us, that Adam by his sin "accomplished the salvation of the elect." If this is not plucking a jewel from Christ's crown, to adorn the most improper head in the world next to that of Satan, I am very much mistaken.

But if God "brought about his purpose" concerning the salvation of the elect by the fall of Adam, tell us, I pray, who brought about the purpose concerning "the damnation of the reprobate?" Had the Lord "always this thing in view" also? On the brink of what a dreadful abyss hath your

doctrine brought me!—Sir, my mind recoils; I flee from the God whose unprovoked wrath rose before the beginning of the world, against millions of his unformed, and therefore guiltless creatures! He that “tasted death for every man” bids me flee, and he points me from Dr. Crisp to God, “whose mercy is over all his works,” till they personally forfeit it by obstinately trampling upon his richest grace.

XIV. As if it were not enough to have represented our salvation in part accomplished by the transgression of our first parents, you bring in *Herod and Pontius Pilate*; and observe, to the honour of the good which sin does to the elect, that those unrighteous judges did “whatsoever God’s hand and counsel determined before to be done.” If you quote this passage to insinuate that God predetermined their sin, you reflect upon the divine holiness, and apologize for the murderers of our Lord, as you have for the murderer of Uriah.

I grant, that when God saw, in the light of his infinite foreknowledge, that Pilate and Caiaphas would absolutely choose injustice and cruelty, he determined that they should have the awful opportunity of exercising them against his Anointed. As a skilful pilot, without predetermining and raising a contrary wind, foresees it will rise, and predetermines so to manage the rudder and sails of his ship, as to make it answer a good purpose: So God overruled the foreseen wickedness of those men, and made it subservient to his merciful justice in offering up the true Paschal Lamb. But, as it would be very absurd to ascribe to the *contrary wind* the praise due to the *pilot’s skill*; so it is very unevangelical to ascribe to the sin of Pilate, or of Joseph’s brethren, the good which God drew from some of its extraordinary circumstances.

XV. “The Lord has promised to make ‘all things work for good to those that love him;’—and

if all things, then their very sins and corruptions are included in the royal promise." A syren song this! which you unhappily try to support by Scripture. But 1. If "this is the love of God that we keep his commandments," how will you prove that David loved God when he left his own wife for that of Uriah? Does not our Lord declare that those who will not "forsake husband, wife, children, and all things for his sake, are not worthy of him," either as believers or lovers? And are those *worthy of him* who break his commandment, and take their neighbours' wives? Again, if St. John, speaking of one who does not relieve an indigent brother, asks with indignation, "How dwelleth the love of God in *him*?" May I not with greater reason say, "How dwelt the love of God in David?" who, far from assisting Uriah, murdered his soul by drunkenness, and his body with the sword! And if David did not love God, how can you believe that a promise made to *those that love God*, respected him in his state of impenitency?—2. When we extol free grace, and declare that "God's mercy is over all his works," you directly answer, that the word *all* must be taken in a limited sense; but when *you* extol the profitableness of sin, *ALL*, in "*ALL things working for good*," must be taken universally, and include *sin* and *corruption*, contrary to the context.—3. I say, contrary to the context; for just before the Apostle declares, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;" ye shall evidence the truth of Ezekiel's doctrine, "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, in his sin that he hath sinned shall he die;" and at the end of the chapter, the *things that work for good* are enumerated, and they include *all tribulations and creatures*; but not our own sin, unless you can prove it to be God's creature, and not the devil's production.—4. It is no where promised that *sin* shall do us good. On the contrary, God constantly

represents it as the greatest evil in the world, the root of all other temporal and eternal evils; and as he makes it the object of his invariable disapprobation, so, till they repent, he levels his severest threatenings at sinners, without respect of persons. But the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis* has made a new discovery. Through the glass of Dr. Crisp he sees that one of the choicest promises in Scripture respects the commission of sin, of theft and incest, adultery and murder ! So grossly are threatenings and promises, punishments and rewards, confounded together by this fashionable divinity !

5. I grant that in some cases, the *punishment* inflicted upon a sinner has been over-ruled for good ; but what is this to the *sin itself*? Is it reasonable to ascribe to *sin* the good that may spring from the *rod* with which sin is punished ? Some robbers have, perhaps, been brought to repentance by the gallows, and others deterred from committing robbery by the terror of their punishment ; but by what rule in logic, or divinity, can we infer from thence, either that any robbers love God, or that all robberies shall work together for their good ?

But “*Onesimus robbed Philemon his master ; and, fleeing from justice, was brought under Paul’s preaching and converted.*” Surely, Sir, you do not insinuate that *Onesimus’s conversion depended upon robbing his master !* or that it would not have been better for him to have served his master faithfully, and stayed in Asia to hear the Gospel with *Philemon*, than to have rambled to Rome for it in consequence of his crime ! The Heathens said, “*Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.*” It will be well if some do not say, upon a fairer prospect than theirs, “*Let us steal and rob, for to-morrow we shall be converted !*”

XVI. You add, that “*the royal and holy seed was continued by the incest of Judah with Tamar, and the adultery of David with Bath-*

sheba." And do you really think, Sir, God made choice of that line to show how adultery and incest "work together for good?" For my part, I rather think that it was because if he had chosen any other line, he would have met with more such blots. You know that God slew David's child conceived in adultery; and if he chose Solomon to succeed David, it was not because the adulterous Bathsheba was his mother, but because he was then the best of David's children: For I may say of God's choosing the son, what Samuel said of his choosing the father, "The Lord looketh at the heart." 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

XVII. You proceed in your enumeration of the good that sin does to the pleasant children:—"How has many a poor soul, who has been faithless through fear of man, even blessed God for Peter's denial!" Surely, Sir, you mistake: None but the fiend who desired to have Peter "that he might sift him," could bless God for the Apostle's crime; nor could any one, on such a horrid account, bless any other god but "the god of this world." David said, "My eyes run down with water, because men keep not thy law;" but the author of *Pietas Oxoniensis* tells us, that "many a poor soul has blessed God" for the most horrid breaches of his law! Weep no more, perfidious Apostle: Thou hast "cast thy net on the right side of the ship;" thy three curses have procured God multitudes of blessings! Surely, Sir, you cannot mean this! "Many a poor soul has blessed God" for granting a *pardon to Peter*, but never for *Peter's denial*. It is extremely dangerous thus to confound a crime, with the pardon granted to a penitent criminal.

XVIII. Upon the same principle you add, "How have many others been raised out of the mire, by considering the tenderness shown to the incestuous Corinthian!" I am glad you do not say, "by

considering the *incest* of the Corinthian." The good received by many did not then spring from his horrid crime, but from the tenderness of the Apostle. This instance, therefore, by your own confession, does not prove that sin does any good to believers.

But as you tell us with what *tenderness* the Apostle restored that man, when he was swallowed up in godly sorrow, you will permit me to remind you of the *severity* which he showed him while he continued impenitent. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," said he, "when ye are gathered together, deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." Hence it appears, the Apostle thought his case so desperate, that his body must be solemnly delivered to Satan, in order, if possible, to bring his soul to repentance. Now, if the incestuous man's sin "had been for ever and for ever cancelled;" if he had not forfeited the divine favour, and cut himself off from the *general assembly of the first-born* by his crime; what power could the Apostle, who acted under the influence of the Spirit, have had to cut him off from the visible Church as a corrupt member? what right to deliver the body of one of "God's pleasant children" to destruction? Was this *finished salvation*? For my part, as I do not believe in a *twofold*, I had almost said *jesuitical*, will in God, I am persuaded, he would have us consider things as they are; an impenitent adulterer as a profligate heathen, and a penitent believer as "his pleasant child."

XIX. You add, 1. A "grievous fall serves to make believers know their place." No, indeed, it serves only to make them forget their place; witness David, who, far from knowing his place, wickedly took that of Uriah; and Eve, who, by falling into the condemnation of the devil, took

her Maker's place, in her imagination, and esteemed herself as wise as God.—2. "It drives them nearer to Christ." Surely you mistake, Sir; you mean nearer the devil; for a fall into pride may drive me nearer Lucifer, a fall into adultery and murder may drive me nearer Belial and Moloch; but not nearer Jesus Christ.—3. "It makes them more dependent on his strength." No such thing. The genuine effect of a fall into sin, is to stupify the conscience and harden the heart; witness the state of obduracy in which God found Adam, and the state of carnal security in which Nathan found David, after their crimes.—4. "It keeps them more watchful for the future." Just the reverse: It prevents their watching for the future. If David had been made more watchful by falling into adultery, would he have fallen into treachery and murder? If Peter had been made more watchful by his *first* falling into perjury, would he have fallen three times successively?—5. "It will cause them to sympathize with others in the like situation." By no means. A fall into sin will naturally make us desirous of drawing another into our guilty condition. Witness the Devil and Eve, Eve and Adam, David and Bathsheba. The royal adulterer was so far from sympathizing with the man who had unkindly taken his neighbour's favourite ewe lamb, that he directly swore, "As the Lord liveth, the man that has done this thing shall surely die."

6. "It will make them sing louder to the praise of restoring grace throughout all the ages of eternity." I demand proof of this. I greatly question whether Demas, Alexander the coppersmith, Hymeneus, and many of the fallen believers mentioned in the epistles of our Lord to the churches of Asia, in the epistle to the Hebrews, and in those of St. Peter, St. James, and St. Jude, shall sing restoring grace at all. The Apostle, far from

representing them as singing *louder*, gives us to understand that many of them shall be *thought worthy of a much sorer punishment* than the sinners consumed by fire from heaven ; and that *there remaineth therefore no more sacrifice for their sins* ; (a sure proof that Christ's sacrifice availed for them, till they *accounted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing*;) for, adds the Apostle, “*The Lord will judge his people* ;” and, notwithstanding all that Dr. Crisp says to the contrary, *There remaineth* (for apostates) “*a certain, fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. Weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth,*” and not “*louder songs,*” await the *unprofitable servant.*

But supposing some are *renewed to repentance*, and *escape out of the snare of the devil* ; can you imagine they will be upon the footing of those who, standing *steadfast and immovable*, always *abounded in the work of the Lord*? Shall then *the labour of these be in vain in the Lord?* Are not our works to follow us ? Shall the unprofitable servant, if restored, receive a crown of glory equal to his, who, from the time he listed, always *fought the good fight, and kept the faith*? The doctrine you would inculcate, at once bears hard upon the equity of the divine conduct, and strikes a fatal blow at the root of all diligence and faithfulness, so strongly recommended in the oracles of God.

You will be sensible of your error if you observe, that all the fine things which you tell us of *a fall into sin*, belong not to the fall, but to a *happy recovery from it* ; and my honoured correspondent is as much mistaken, when he ascribes to sin the effects of *repentance and faith*, as if he ascribed to a frost the effects of a thaw, or to sickness the consequence of a recovery.

And now that we have seen how you have done a pious man's strange works ; permit me, Sir, to

tell you, that, through the prevalence of human corruption, a word spoken for sin generally goes farther than ten thousand spoken against it. This I know, that if a fall, in an hour of temptation, appear only half so profitable as you represent it, thousands will venture after David into the whirlpool of wickedness. But, alas! *facilis descensus Acerni &c.*, it is easier to follow him when he plunges in than when he struggles out, with his *eyes wasted, his flesh dried up, and his bones broken.*

XX. I gladly do you the justice, to observe, that you exclaim against sin in the next page; but does not the antidote come too late? You say, "Whatever may be God's secret will, we are to keep close to the declaration of his own written word, which binds us to resist sin." But, alas! you make a bad matter worse, by representing God as having two wills; a secret, effectual will that we should sin; and a revealed will, or written word, commanding us to resist sin! If these insinuations are just, I ask, Why should we not regard God's secret as much as his revealed will? Nay, why should we not regard it more, since it is the more efficacious, and consequently the stronger will?

You add, "He would be mad who should wilfully fall down, and break a leg or an arm, because he knew there was a skilful surgeon at hand to set it." But I beg leave to dissent from my honoured opponent. For, supposing I had a crooked leg, appointed to be broken for good, by God's secret will intimated to me; and supposing a dear friend strongly argued, not only that the surgeon is at hand, but that he would render my leg straighter, handsomer, and stronger than before; must I not be a fool, or a coward, if I hesitated throwing myself down?

O Sir, if the "deceitfulness of sin" is so great, that thousands greedily commit it, when the gal-

lows on earth, and horrible torments in hell, are proposed for their wages; how will they be able to escape in the hour of temptation, if they are encouraged to transgress the divine law, by assurances that they shall reap eternal advantages from their sin! O! how highly necessary was it, that Mr. W. should warn his assistants against talking of a *state of justification and sanctification*, in so unguarded a manner as you, and the other admirers of Dr. Crisp, frequently do?

You conclude this letter by some quotations from Mr. Wesley, whom you vainly try to press into the Doctor's service, by representing him as saying of established Christians what he speaks of babes in Christ; and of the commission of adultery and murder, what he only means of evil desire resisted, and evil tempers restrained: But more of this in a *Treatise on Christian Perfection*.

#### REMARKS ON THE FIFTH LETTER.

THIS letter begins by a civil reproof for "speaking rather in a sneering manner of that heart-cheering expression so often used by awakened divines, *the finished salvation of Christ*:" An expression which, by the by, you will not find once in all my letters. But why some divines, whom you look upon as unawakened, do not admire the uns scriptural expression of *finished salvation*, you may see in the Second Check, pages 195—201.

I am thankful for your second reproof, and hope it will make me more careful not to "speak as a man of the world." But the third I really cannot thank you for. "You are not very sparing of hard names against Dr. Crisp," says my honoured correspondent; and again, "The hard names, and heavy censures thrown out against the Doctor, are by far more unjustifiable than what has been delivered against Mr. W." The hardest names I give to your favourite divine are, *the*

*Doctor, the good Doctor, and the honest Doctor,* whom, notwithstanding all his mistakes, I represent (Second Check, page 137) as a good man, shouting aloud, *Salvation to the Lamb of God!* Now, Sir, I should be glad to know by what rule, either of criticism or charity, you can prove that these are hard names, more unjustifiable than the names of "Papists unmasked, heretic, apostate, worse than Papists," &c., which have been of late so liberally bestowed on Mr. W.!

I confess that those branches of Dr. Crisp's doctrine which stand in direct opposition to the practical gospel of Christ, I have taken the liberty to call Crispianity; for had I called them Christianity, my conscience and one half of the Bible would have flown in my face: And had I called them *Calvinism*, Williams, Flavel, Allen, Bishop Hopkins, and numbers of sound Calvinists, would have proved me mistaken; for they agree to represent the peculiarities of the Doctor, as *loose Antinomian tenets*; and if any man can prove them either *legal* or *evangelical*, I shall gladly recant those epithets, which I have sometimes given, not to the good Doctor, but his unscriptural notions.

In the mean time permit me to observe, that if any one judges of my letters by the 36th page of your book, he will readily say of them what you say of the Rev. Mr. Sellon's Works: "I have never read them, and from the accounts I hear of the abusive, unchristian spirit with which they are written, I believe I shall never give myself that trouble."—Now, Sir, I have read Mr. Sellon's books; and have therefore more right than you, who never read them, to give them a public character.\*

\* Some of Mr. Sellon's Works are, *Arguments against the Doctrine of General Redemption considered. A Defence of God's sovereignty. And, The Church of England vindicated from the charge of Calvinism.* All these are well worth the reading of every sensible and pious man.

You tell us you "have heard of the imbecility of the performance," &c. ; and I assure my readers, I have found it a masterly mixture of the skill belonging to the sensible scholar, the good logician, and the sound Anti-Crispian divine.

He is blunt, I confess, and sometimes to an excess. "Really," says he in a private letter, "I cannot set my razor; there is a roughness about me I cannot get rid of. If honest truth will not excuse me, I must bear the blame of those whom nothing will please but smooth things." But sharp (you would say *abusive*) as he is, permit me to tell you, that my much-admired countryman, Calvin, was much more so.

For my part, though I would no more plead for *abuse*, than for *adultery* and *murder*, yet, like a true Swiss, I love *blunt honesty*; and, to give you a proof of it, I shall take the liberty to observe, It is much easier to say a book is full of *hard names*, and *heavy censures*, *written in an abusive, unchristian spirit*, and to insinuate it is "dangerous, or not worth reading," than it is fairly to answer one single page of it. And how far a late publication proves the truth of this observation, I leave our candid readers to decide.

Page 38, you "assure me upon honour, that Mr. W.'s pieces against election and perseverance (Why did you forget *reprobation*?) have greatly tended to establish your belief in those most comfortable doctrines. Hence you conclude, that Mr. W.'s pen has done much service to the Calvinistic cause;" and add, that "some very experienced Christians hope he will write again upon that subject, or publish a new edition of his former Tracts."

You are too much acquainted with the world, not to know that most Deists declare, they were established in their sentiments by reading the Old and New Testament. But would you argue con-

clusively if you inferred from thence, that the sacred writers have done infidelity *much service*? And if some confident infidels expressed their hopes, that our Bishops would reprint the Bible to propagate Deism, would you not see through their empty boast, and pity their deistical flourish? Permit me to expose by a simile the similar wish of the persons you mention, who, if they are "very experienced Christians," will hardly pass for very modest logicians.

The gentleman of fortune you mention never read Mr. Wesley's Tracts, nor one of Mr. Sellon's on the Crispian orthodoxy; and I am no more surprised to see you both dissent from those divines, than I should be to find you both mistaken upon the bench, if you passed a decisive sentence before you had so much as heard one witness out. The Clergyman you refer to, has probably been as precipitate as the two pious magistrates; therefore, you will permit me to doubt whether he, any more than my honoured opponent, "has had courage enough to see for himself."

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## CONCLUSION.

HAVING so long animadverted upon your letters, it is time to consider the present state of our controversy. Mr. W. privately advances among his own friends some propositions, designed to keep them from running into the fashionable errors of Dr. Crisp. These propositions are secretly procured, and publicly exposed through the three kingdoms, as dreadfully heretical, and subversive of the Protestant doctrine of "justification by faith." In Mr. W.'s absence, a friend writes in defence of his propositions. The Rev. Mr. Shirley, instead of trying to defend his mistakes by argu-

ment, publicly recants his circular letter and his volume of sermons by the lump. Some of the honest souls, who had been carried away by the stream of fashionable error, begin to look about them, and ask whether *narratives* and *recantations* are to pass for *scriptures* and *arguments*? The author of *Pietas Oxoniensis*, to quiet them, enters the lists, and makes a stand against the *Anti-Crispian* propositions; but what a stand!

1. “*Man’s faithfulness*,” says he, “I have no objection to, in a *sober, Gospel sense* of the word.” So Mr. W.’s first proposition, by my opponent’s confession, bears a *sober Gospel sense*.

2. He attacks the doctrine of *working for life*, by proposing some of the very objections answered in the Vindication, without taking the least notice of the answers;—by producing Scriptures quite foreign to the question, and keeping out of sight those which have been advanced;—by passing over in silence a variety of rational arguments;—jumbling all the degrees of spiritual life and death, acceptance and justification, mentioned in the sacred oracles;—confounding all the dispensations of Divine grace towards man;—and levelling at Mr. W. a witticism, which wounds Jesus Christ himself.

3. He acknowledges the truth of the doctrine, that we must *do something in order to attain justification*; and, after this candid concession, fairly gives up the fundamental Protestant doctrine of *justification by faith*;—the very doctrine which Luther called *Articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiae*, and which our Church so strongly maintains in the Articles and Homilies. The Rev. Mr. Shirley throws his sermon on *justification by faith* overboard; his second comes up to mend the matter, and does it so unfortunately as to throw the handle after the axe. He renounces the doctrine itself. “I maintain,” says he, “that believing cannot be

previous to justification, that is, to complete justification." As dangerous a proposition this as was ever advanced by Crisp, and refuted by all the sober Calvinists of the last century !

4. He opposes St. Peter's, Mr. Henry's, and Mr. W.'s doctrine, that "Cornelius was accepted of God in consequence of his 'fearing God and working righteousness ;'" and insinuates that Cornelius was completely accepted *before* he feared God and wrought righteousness. Upon this scheme, the words of St. Peter, "He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him," may mean, "he that dareth God, and worketh unrighteousness, is completely accepted of him !"

5. He represents Mr. W. as a Papist, for having privately observed among his friends, that we have been too much afraid of the word *merit*; while he allows real Protestants, the Countess of Huntingdon, and the Rev. Mr. Shirley to publish and sing, *We MERIT heaven by the righteousness which Christ has supplied*. Nay, he sings the same bold words at the Lock-Chapel. Mr. Madan's "*We merit*," passes for gospel; his Hymns are everywhere recommended as evangelical; but "Popery is about midway between Protestantism and Mr. Wesley!" What strange prejudice! And yet, surprising! my honoured correspondent accuses *me* of betraying "no small degree of chicanery" upon the article of *merit*!

6. He attempts to "split the hair," which Mr. Shirley is wise enough not to attempt. But how? Without ceremony he cuts off the middle term between being *rewarded according to our works*, and *as our works deserve*; he throws out of the question this proposition, that *we are rewarded because of our works*, though it is supported by the plainest scriptures.

7. Notwithstanding this unwarrantable liberty, when he confidently soars upon the wings of ortho-

doxy, to find his broad passage between “ East and West,” he directly falls into Mr. W.’s sentiments about the *rewardableness* of works; and, before he is aware, shakes hands with the good Papist Scotus, and the good Protestant Baxter.

8. The last proposition which he attacks, is, that “ we are continually pleasing or displeasing to God, according to the whole of our inward and outward behaviour.” And what does he advance against it? Assertions and distinctions, contradicted by the general tenor of the Bible:—Scriptures detached from the context, and set at variance with the clearest declarations of God, and loudest dictates of conscience:—And, what is worse than all, dangerous enumerations of the good that falling into adultery, murder, perjury and incest, does to them that love God !

And now, Sir, let the Christian world judge, whether you have been able to fix the mark of error upon one of the propositions so loudly decried as *heretical*; and whether the letters you have honoured me with, do not expose the cause which you have attempted to defend, and demonstrate the absolute necessity of erecting and defending such a seasonable rampart as the Minutes, to check the rapid progress of Crisp’s gospel.

Permit me, honoured Sir, to conclude by assuring you, that, although I have thought myself obliged publicly to show the mistakes in the five letters which you have publicly directed to me, I gladly do you the justice to acknowledge, that your principles have not that effect upon your conduct, which they naturally have upon the conversation of hundreds who are consistent Antinomians. See Second Check, pages 185, 199.

If I have addressed my *Three Checks* to the Rev. Mr. Shirley and yourself, God is my witness, that it was not to reflect upon two of the most eminent characters in the circle of my religious

acquaintance. Foreible circumstances have overruled my inclination. *Decipimur specie recti:*—Thinking to attack error, you have attacked the very truth which Providence calls me to defend: And the attack appears to me so much the more dangerous, as your laborious zeal and eminent piety are more worthy of public regard, than the boisterous rant and loose insinuations of twenty *practical* Antinomians. The tempter is not so great a novice in Antichristian polities, as to engage only *such* to plead for *doctrinal* Antinomianism. This would soon spoil the trade. It is his masterpiece of wisdom to get *good men* to do him that eminent service. He knows that their *good* lives will make way for their *bad* principles. Nor does he ever deceive with more decency and success, than under the respectable cloak of their genuine piety.

If a wicked man plead for sin, *farnum habet in cornu*, he carries the mark on his forehead: We stand on our guard. But when a good man gives us to understand, that “there are no lengths God’s people may not run, nor any depths they may not fall into, without losing the character of men after God’s own heart;—that many will praise God for our denial of Christ;—that sin and corruption work for good;—that a fall into adultery will drive us nearer to Christ, and make us sing louder to the praise of free grace;”—when he quotes Scripture too in order to support these assertions, calling them the pure Gospel, and representing the opposite doctrine as the Pelagian heresy worse than Popery itself, he casts the Antinomian net “on the right side of the ship,” and is likely to enclose a great multitude of unwary men; especially if some of the *best* hands in the kingdom drive the frightened shoal into the net, and help to drag it on shore.

This is what I apprehend you have done, not designedly, but thinking to do God service: And this is what every good man, who does not look at

the Gospel through Crisp's glass, must resolutely oppose. Hence the steadiness with which I have looked in the face a man of God, whose feet I should be glad to wash at any time, under a lively sense of my great inferiority.

And now, as if I were admitted to show you that humble mark of brotherly love, I beg you would not consider the unceremonious plainness of a Swiss (mountaineer) as the sarcastic insolence of an incorrigible Arminian.

I beseech you to make some difference between the *wisdom* and *poison* of the serpent. If charity forbids to meddle with the latter, does not Christ recommend the former? Is every mild, well-meant irony, a bitter and cruel sarcasm? Should we directly insinuate that it is the sign of "a bad spirit," the mark of murder in the heart; and that he who uses it to sharpen the truth,\* *scatters firebrands, arrows, and death?* To say nothing of Elijah and the priests of Baal, did our Lord want either deep seriousness or ardent love, when, coming more than conqueror from his third conflict in Gethsemane, he roused his nodding disciples by this compassionate irony, "Sleep on now, and take your rest?" Did not the usefulness of a loud call, a deserved reproof, a seasonable expostulation, and a solemn warning, meet in that well-timed figure of speech? And was it not more effectual than the two awful charges which he had given them before?

I entreat you to consider, that when the meanest of God's Ministers has truth and conscience on his side, without being either *abusive* or *uncharitable*, he may say, even to one whom the Lord has exalted

\* This assertion is the grand argument of a writer in the *Gospel Magazine*, and of a charitable gentleman, (a Baptist Minister, I think,) in a printed letter dated Bath. If this method of argument is Calvinistically evangelical, my readers will perceive it is very far from being either legal or scripturally logical.

to the royal dignity, "Thou art the man!" God has exalted you, not only among the gentlemen of fortune in this kingdom, but, what is an infinitely greater blessing, among the converted men who are "translated into the kingdom of his dear Son." Yet by a mistake, fashionable among religious people, you have unhappily paid more regard to Dr. Crisp than to St. James. And as you have pleaded the dangerous cause of the impenitent monarch, I have addressed you with the honest boldness of the expostulating prophet. I have said to my honoured opponent, "Thou art the man!" With a commendable design of comforting "mourning backsliders, you have, inadvertently, 'given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme,' and unscripturally assured believers, that falls even into enormous sins shall work for their good, and accomplish God's purposes for his glory and their salvation." And as I have supported my expostulations about your *doctrinal* mistakes with plain Scripture, which amounts to a "Thus says the Lord;" I beseech you to take them in as good part as King David did the prophet's reproofs about his *practical* miscarriages.

I owe much respect to you; but more to truth, to conscience, and to God. If, in trying to discharge my duty towards them, I have inadvertently betrayed any want of respect for you, I humbly ask your pardon; and I can assure you, in the face of the whole world, that, notwithstanding your strong attachment to the peculiarities of Dr. Crisp, as there is no family in the world to which I am under greater obligations than yours, so there are few gentlemen for whom I have so peculiar an esteem, as for the respectable author of *Pictas Oxoniensis*. And till we come where no mistake will raise prejudice, and no prejudice will foment opposition to any part of the truth;—till we meet where all that "fear God, and work righteousness,"

however jarring together now, will join in an eternal chorus, and with perfect harmony ascribe a common “salvation to the Lamb that was slain,” I declare in the fear of God, and in the name of Jesus, that no opposite views of the same truths, no clashing diversity of contrary sentiments, no plausible insinuations of narrow-hearted bigotry, shall hinder me from remaining with the greatest sincerity, honoured and dear Sir, your most obedient and obliged servant in the bonds of a *practical* Gospel,

MADELEY, Feb. 3, 1772.

J. F.

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#### POSTSCRIPT.

As I have cleared my conscience with respect to *Antinomianism*, a subject which, at this time, appears to me of the last importance; I should be glad to employ my leisure hours in writing on subjects more suitable to my taste and private edification: It is by no means my design to obtrude my sentiments upon my Calvinian, any more than upon my Arminian, brethren. I sincerely wish peace to both, upon the terms of *mutual forbearance*: *Veniam petimusque, damusque, vicissim*. Should, therefore, a *fourth* publication call for a *Fourth Check*, if I can accomplish it, it shall be short. I shall just thank my antagonist for his *deserved* reproofs, or point out his *capital* mistakes, and quote the pages in the *Three Checks* where his objections are already answered. But if his performance is merely Calvinistical, I shall take the liberty of referring him to the Rev. Mr. Sellon’s “imbecile performance,” which, I apprehend, every unprejudiced person, who has courage to *see* and *read* for himself, will find *strong* enough to refute the *strongest* arguments of Elisha Coles and the Synod of Dort.

Before I lay by my pen, I beg leave to address,

a moment, the true believers who espouse Calvin's sentiments. Think not, honoured brethren, that I have no eyes to see the eminent services which many of you render to the Church of Christ ; no heart to bless God for the Christian graces which shine in your exemplary conduct : no pen to testify that, "by letting your light shine before men," you "adorn the Gospel of God our Saviour," as many of your predecessors have done before you. I am not only persuaded that your opinions are consistent with a genuine conversion, but, I take heaven to witness, how much I prefer a Calvinist who loves God, to a Remonstrant who does not. Yes, although I value Christ infinitely above Calvin, and St. James above that well-meaning man Dr. Crisp, I had a thousand times rather be *doctrinally* mistaken with the latter, than *practically* deluded with those who speak well of St. James's "perfect law of liberty," and yet remain lukewarm Laodiceans in heart, and perhaps gross Antinomians in conduct.

This I observe, to do your piety justice, and prevent the men of this world, into whose hands these sheets may fall, from "falsely accusing your good conversation in Christ;" and confounding you with practical Antinomians, some of whose dangerous notions you inadvertently countenance. If I have therefore taken the liberty of exposing your favourite mistakes, do me the justice to believe, that it was not to pour contempt upon your respectable persons ; but to set your peculiarities in such a light, as might either engage you to renounce them, or check the forwardness with which some have lately recommended them as the only *doctrines of grace*, and the *pure Gospel* of Jesus Christ ; unkindly representing their Remonstrant brethren as enemies to free grace, and abettors of a dreadful heresy.

If you think I have exceeded, in my Checks, the bounds which brotherly love prescribes to a contro-

versial writer, permit me to remind you and myself, that we are parties, and therefore peculiarly liable to think the worst of each other's intentions and performances. By our respective publications, we have appealed to the serious world; let us not then take the matter out of their hands: And while we leave to our merciful God the judging of our spirits, let us leave our serious readers to judge of our arguments, and pass sentence upon the manner in which they are proposed.

And you, my Remonstrant brethren, who attentively look at our controversial engagement; while a Geneva Anti-Calvinist solicits an interest in your prayers for *meekness of wisdom*, permit him to offer you some reasonable advices, which he wants to inculcate upon his own mind also.

1. More than ever let us confirm our love towards our Calvinist brethren. If our arguments gall them, let us not envenom the sore by maliciously triumphing over them. Nothing is more likely to provoke their displeasure, and drive them from what we believe to be the truth. If we, that immediately "bear the burden and heat of" this controversial day, are obliged to cut, help us to act the part of friendly opponents, by directly pouring into the wound the healing balsam of brotherly love; and if you see us carried beyond the bounds of moderation, instantly admonish us, and check our Checks. Your *whispers* will go farther than the *clamours* of our opponents. The former, we know, must proceed from truth; but we are apt to suspect that the latter spring from partiality, or a mere stratagem not uncommon in controversial wars. Witness the clamour of the Jews, and those of the Ephesians, when the one saw that their temple, and the other, that great Diana, was in danger.

2. Do not rejoice in the *mistakes* of our opponents, but in the detection of error. Desire not

that we, but that *truth*, may prevail. Let us not only be willing that our brethren should win the day, if they have truth on their side; but let us make it matter of solemn and constant prayer. While we deery confined, shackled grace, obtruded upon us as free grace; let not bigotry confine our affections, and shackle our hearts. Nothing would be more absurd than to fall into Calvinian narrowness of spirit, while we oppose Calvin's narrow system. If we admit the temper, we might as well be quite consistent, and at once embrace the doctrine. The best method of recommending God's universal love to mankind is, to love all men universally. If absolute reprobation has no place in our principles, let it have none in our affections. If we believe that all share in the Divine mercy, let all be interested in our brotherly kindness. Should such *practical demonstrations* of universal love second our *scriptural arguments* for it, by God's blessing, bigotry would soon return to Rome, and narrow grace fly back to Geneva.

3. Let us strictly observe the rules of decency and kindness, taking care not to treat, upon any provocation, any of our opponents, in the same manner that they have treated Mr. Wesley. The men of the world hint sometimes that he is a Papist and a Jesuit: But good mistaken men have gone much farther in the present controversy. They have published to the world, that they "do verily believe his principles are too rotten for even a Papist to rest upon;—that it may be supposed, Popery is about the midway between Protestantism and him;—that he wades through the quagmires of Pelagianism, deals in inconsistencies, manifest contradictions, and strange prevarications;—that, if a contrast were drawn from his various assertions upon the doctrine of sinless perfection, a little piece might extend into a folio volume;”—and that they are “more than ever convinced of his pre-

varicating disposition." Not satisfied with going to a Benedictine Monk in Paris for help against his dreadful heresy, they have wittily extracted an argument *ad hominem*, from the comfortable dish of tea which he drinks with Mrs. Wesley ; and, to complete the demonstration of their respect for that grey-headed, laborious minister of Christ, they have brought him upon the stage of the controversy in a dress of their own contriving, and made him declare to the world, that, " whenever he and fifty-three of his fellow-labourers say one thing, they mean quite another." And what has he done to deserve this usage at their hands ? Which of them has he treated unjustly or unkindly ? Even in the course of this controversy, has he injured any man ? May he not say to this hour, *Tu pugnas : Ego vapulo tantum* ? Let us avoid this warmth, my brethren ; remembering that personal reflections will never pass for convincing arguments with the judicious and humane.

I have endeavoured to follow this advice with regard to Crisp : Nevertheless, lest you should rank him with practical Antinomians, I once more gladly profess my belief that he was a good man ; and desire that none of you would condemn all his sermons, much less his character, on account of his unguarded Antinomian propositions, refuted by Williams and Baxter, some of which I have taken the liberty to produce in the preceding Checks. As there are a few things exceptionable in good Bishop Hopkins, so there are many things admirable in Crisp's works : And as the glorious truths advanced by the former, should not make you receive his Calvinian mistakes as gospel ; so the illegal tenets of the latter should by no means make you reject his evangelical sayings as Antinomianism. Prove, therefore, " all things, and hold fast that which is good," though it should be advanced by the warmest of our opponents ; but

whatever unadvised step their zeal for what they believe to be the truth makes them take, "put ye on (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, long-suffering, forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

4. If you would help us to remove the prejudices of our brethren, not only grant with a good grace, but strongly insist upon, the great truths for which they make so noble a stand. Steadily assert with them, that the seraps of morality and formality, by which Pharisees and Deists pretend to merit the Divine favour, are only "filthy rags" in the sight of a holy God; and that no righteousness is current in heaven but "the righteousness which is of God by faith." If they have set their hearts upon calling it the *imputed righteousness of Christ*, though the expression is not strictly scriptural, let it pass; but give them to understand that as Divine imputation of righteousness\* is a most glorious reality, so *human imputation* is a most delusive dream; and that of this sort is undoubtedly the *Calvinian imputation* of righteousness to a man who actually defiles his neighbour's bed, and betrays innocent blood. A dangerous contrivance this! not less sub-

\* God's imputation of righteousness is always, according to truth. As all sinful men actually partake of Adam's sinful nature, by the defiling seed of his corruption, before God accounts them guilty together with him; so all the righteous men partake of Christ's holy nature by the seed of Divine grace, before God accounts them righteous together with Christ. This dictate of reason is confirmed by Scripture. "Abraham was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness; and it shall be imputed to us, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead." (Rom. iv. 21, &c.) From this passage it is evident, that faith, which unites to Christ and "purifies the heart," is previous to God's imputation of righteousness, although not to Crisp's imputation, which, by a little mistake of only five or six thousand years, he dates from "before the foundation of the world." One is sadly out, either the good Doctor, or the great Apostle.

versive of common heathenish morality, than of St. James's "pure and undefiled religion."

Again : Our Calvinist brethren excel in setting forth a part of Christ's priestly office ; I mean the immaculate purity of his most holy sacrifice, and the all-atoning, all-meritorious sacrifice of his bloody death. Here imitate and if possible surpass them. Shout a *finished atonement* louder than they. Behold with raptures of joy, and bid all around you behold with transports of gratitude, the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." If they call this complete atonement, *finished salvation*, or the *finished work of Christ*, indulge them still ; for peace' sake, let those expressions pass : Nevertheless, at proper times give them to understand, that it is absolutely necessary to reason, Scripture, and Christian experience, to think that all Christ's mediatorial work is finished. Insinuate, you should be very miserable if he had nothing more to do for you and in you. Tell them, as they can bear it, that he works daily as a *Prophet* to enlighten you, as a *Priest* to make intercession for you, as a *King* to subdue your enemies, as a *Redeemer* to deliver you out of all your troubles, and as a *Saviour* to help you to work out your own salvation ; and hint that in all these respects Christ's work is no more finished, than the working of our own salvation is completed.

The judicious will understand you ; as for bigots on all sides, you know they are proof against Scripture and good sense. Nevertheless, mild irony, sharply pointing a scriptural argument, may yet pass between the joints of their impenetrable armour, and make them feel—either some shame, or some weariness of contention. But this is a dangerous method, which I would recommend to very few. None should dip his pen in the wine of irony, till he has dipped it in the oil of love ; and even then he should not use it without constant prayer, and as

much caution as a surgeon uses in lancing an imposthume. If he go too deep, he does mischief; if not deep enough, he loses his time; the virulent humour is not discharged, but irritated by the skin-deep operation. And “ who is sufficient for these things ? ” Gracious God of wisdom and love ! if thou callest us to this difficult and thankless office, let all “ our sufficiency be of thee ; ” and should the operation succeed, thine, and thine alone, shall be all the glory.

5. And yet, brethren, *I show you a more excellent way* than that of mild irony sharpening a strong argument. If *love* be the fulfilling of the law, *love*, after all, must be the destruction of Antinomianism. We shall do but little good by exposing the doctrinal Antinomianism of Crisp’s admirers, if our own tempers and conduct are inconsistent with our profession of evangelical legality. When our antagonists cannot shake our arguments, they will upbraid us with our practice. Let us then take care not to *hold the truth in unrighteousness*; let our moderation and evangelical legality appear even to our candid opponents; so shall “ the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us ” that believe the Anti-Crispian truth; so shall our faith *establish the law* of ardent love to God and man; and wherever that law is established, Antinomianism is no more. And if, when we truly love our antagonists, they still look upon our opposition to their errors as an abuse of their persons, and call our exposing their mistakes, “ sneering at the truth ; ” let us wrap our souls in the mantle of that *love* which is not provoked, remembering, “ the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.”

6. Above all, while we expostulate with our brethren for going to one extreme, let us not go to another. Many in the last century so preached what Christ did for us in the days of his flesh, as to

overlook what he does in us in the days of his Spirit. The Quakers saw their error; but while they exposed it, they ran into the opposite. They so extolled Christ “living in us,” as to say but little of Christ “dying for us.” Let us, my brethren, learn wisdom by their contrary mistakes. While some run full east, and others full west, keep we under the bright meridian line of evangelical truth, at an equal distance from their dangerous extremes. By cordial faith let us daily *receive the atonement*; and making our perpetual boast of Christ crucified, let us recommend his inestimable merits to all convinced sinners, cheerfully commanding our souls to him in well-doing, and growing in his knowledge, till we experience that he “is all in all.” So shall we “adorn the Gospel of God our Saviour in all things;” nor will our opponents have any occasion to reprove us for *Pharisaic unbelief*, when we reprove them for *Antinomian faith*.

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